SHORT STORY CLASSICS

FOREIGN

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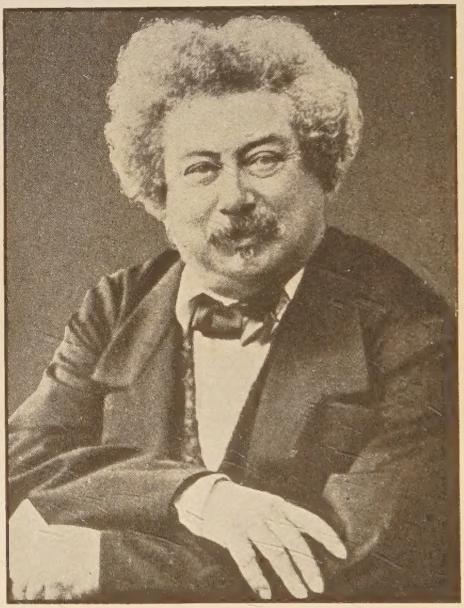

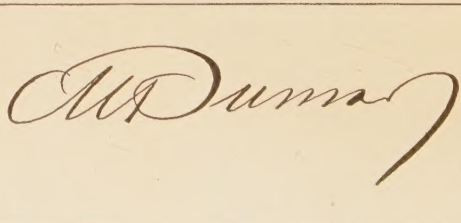

Alexandre Dumas, Fils

SHORT STORY CLASSICS

(FOREIGN)

VOLUME FOUR
FRENCH I

EDITED BY
William Patten

WITH
AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES

P. F. COLLIER & SON
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THE UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE

BY HONORÉ DE BALZAC

"The Unknown Masterpiece" is considered not only one of the finest of Balzac's tales, but he himself considered it a valuable addition to his "Philosophical Studies." Balzac, born at Tours, 1799, died at Paris, 1850, gives one the impression of father confessor to unfortunate women of the world and of the demi-monde —a Samuel Richardson, but with far deeper, broader sympathies. In Paris he lived a life of privation, writing volumes of unsuccessful things. The first novel that appeared under his own name was "The Last Chouan," 1827; his first success "The Ass's Skin," 1830.

The idea of combining under the general title of "Comédie Humaine" that long series of great novels, which rose to their highest level in "Eugénie Grandet," did not occur to him until later.

THE UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE

TO A LORD

BY HONORÉ DE BALZAC

1845

I

GILLETTE

ON a cold December morning in the year 1612, a young man, whose clothing was somewhat of the thinnest, was walking to and fro before a gateway in the Rue des Grands-Augustins in Paris. He went up and down the street before this house with the irresolution of a gallant who dares not venture into the presence of the mistress whom he loves for the first time, easy of access though she may be; but after a sufficiently long interval of hesitation, he at last crossed the threshold and inquired of an old woman, who was sweeping out a large room on the ground floor, whether Master Porbus was within. Receiving a reply in the affirmative, the young man went slowly up the staircase, like a gentleman but newly come to court, and doubtful as to his reception by the king. He came to a stand once more on the landing at the head of the stairs, and again he hesitated before raising his hand to the grotesque knocker

on the door of the studio, where doubtless the painter was at work—Master Porbus, sometime painter in ordinary to Henri IV till Mary de' Medici took Rubens into favor.

The young man felt deeply stirred by an emotion that must thrill the hearts of all great artists when, in the pride of their youth and their first love of art, they come into the presence of a master or stand before a masterpiece. For all human sentiments there is a time of early blossoming, a day of generous enthusiasm that gradually fades until nothing is left of happiness but a memory, and glory is known for a delusion. Of all these delicate and short-lived emotions, none so resemble love as the passion of a young artist for his art, as he is about to enter on the blissful martyrdom of his career of glory and disaster, of vague expectations and real disappointments.

Those who have missed this experience in the early days of light purses; who have not, in the dawn of their genius, stood in the presence of a master and felt the throbbing of their hearts, will always carry in their inmost souls a chord that has never been touched, and in their work an indefinable quality will be lacking, a something in the stroke of the brush, a mysterious element that we call poetry. The swaggerers, so puffed up by self-conceit that they are confident oversoon of their success, can never be taken for men of talent save by fools. From this point of view, if youthful modesty is the measure of youthful genius, the stranger on the staircase might be allowed to have something in him; for he seemed to possess the indescribable

diffidence, the early timidity that artists are bound to lose in the course of a great career, even as pretty women lose it as they make progress in the arts of coquetry. Self-distrust vanishes as triumph succeeds to triumph, and modesty is, perhaps, distrust of itself.

The poor neophyte was so overcome by the consciousness of his own presumption and insignificance, that it began to look as if he was hardly likely to penetrate into the studio of the painter, to whom we owe the wonderful portrait of Henri IV. But fate was propitious; an old man came up the staircase. From the quaint costume of this newcomer, his collar of magnificent lace, and a certain serene gravity in his bearing, the first arrival thought that this personage must be either a patron or a friend of the court painter. He stood aside therefore upon the landing to allow the visitor to pass, scrutinizing him curiously the while. Perhaps he might hope to find the good nature of an artist or to receive the good offices of an amateur not unfriendly to the arts; but besides an almost diabolical expression in the face that met his gaze, there was that indescribable something which has an irresistible attraction for artists.

Picture that face. A bald high forehead and rugged jutting brows above a small flat nose turned up at the end, as in the portraits of Socrates and Rabelais; deep lines about the mocking mouth; a short chin, carried proudly, covered with a grizzled pointed beard; sea-green eyes that age might seem to have dimmed were it not for the contrast between the iris and the surrounding mother-of-pearl tints, so that it seemed as

if under the stress of anger or enthusiasm there would be a magnetic power to quell or kindle in their glances. The face was withered beyond wont by the fatigue of years, yet it seemed aged still more by the thoughts that had worn away both soul and body. There were no lashes to the deep-set eyes, and scarcely a trace of the arching lines of the eyebrows above them. Set this head on a spare and feeble frame, place it in a frame of lace wrought like an engraved silver fish-slice, imagine a heavy gold chain over the old man's black doublet, and you will have some dim idea of this strange personage, who seemed still more fantastic in the sombre twilight of the staircase. One of Rembrandt's portraits might have stepped down from its frame to walk in an appropriate atmosphere of gloom, such as the great painter loved. The older man gave the younger a shrewd glance, and knocked thrice at the door. It was opened by a man of forty or thereabout, who seemed to be an invalid.

"Good day, Master."

Porbus bowed respectfully, and held the door open for the younger man to enter, thinking that the latter accompanied his visitor; and when he saw that the neophyte stood a while as if spellbound, feeling, as every artist-nature must feel, the fascinating influence of the first sight of a studio in which the material processes of art are revealed, Porbus troubled himself no more about this second comer.

All the light in the studio came from a window in the roof, and was concentrated upon an easel, where a canvas stood untouched as yet save for three or four

outlines in chalk. The daylight scarcely reached the remoter angles and corners of the vast room; they were as dark as night, but the silver ornamented breastplate of a Reiter's corselet, that hung upon the wall, attracted a stray gleam to its dim abiding-place among the brown shadows; or a shaft of light shot across the carved and glistening surface of an antique sideboard covered with curious silver-plate, or struck out a line of glittering dots among the raised threads of the golden warp of some old brocaded curtains, where the lines of the stiff, heavy folds were broken, as the stuff had been flung carelessly down to serve as a model.

Plaster *écorchés* stood about the room; and here and there, on shelves and tables, lay fragments of classical sculpture—torsos of antique goddesses, worn smooth as though all the years of the centuries that had passed over them had been lovers' kisses. The walls were covered, from floor to ceiling, with countless sketches in charcoal, red chalk, or pen and ink. Amid the litter and confusion of color boxes, overturned stools, flasks of oil, and essences, there was just room to move so as to reach the illuminated circular space where the easel stood. The light from the window in the roof fell full upon Porbus's pale face and on the ivory-tinted forehead of his strange visitor. But in another moment the younger man heeded nothing but a picture that had already become famous even in those stormy days of political and religious revolution, a picture that a few of the zealous worshipers, who have so often kept the sacred fire of art alive in evil days, were wont to

go on pilgrimage to see. The beautiful panel represented a Saint Mary of Egypt about to pay her passage across the seas. It was a masterpiece destined for Mary de' Medici, who sold it in later years of poverty.

"I like your saint," the old man remarked, addressing Porbus. "I would give you ten golden crowns for her over and above the price the Queen is paying; but as for putting a spoke in that wheel—the devil take it!"

"It is good then?"

"Hey! hey!" said the old man; "good, say you?—Yes and no. Your good woman is not badly done, but she is not alive. You artists fancy that when a figure is correctly drawn, and everything in its place according to the rules of anatomy, there is nothing more to be done. You make up the flesh tints beforehand on your palettes according to your formulæ, and fill in the outlines with due care that one side of the face shall be darker than the other; and because you look from time to time at a naked woman who stands on the platform before you, you fondly imagine that you have copied nature, think yourselves to be painters, believe that you have wrested His secret from God. Pshaw! You may know your syntax thoroughly and make no blunders in your grammar, but it takes that and something more to make a great poet. Look at your saint, Porbus! At a first glance she is admirable; look at her again, and you see at once that she is glued to the background, and that you could not walk round her. She is a silhouette that turns but one side of her face to all beholders, a figure cut out of canvas, an image

with no power to move nor change her position. I feel as if there were no air between that arm and the background, no space, no sense of distance in your canvas. The perspective is perfectly correct, the strength of the coloring is accurately diminished with the distance; but, in spite of these praiseworthy efforts, I could never bring myself to believe that the warm breath of life comes and goes in that beautiful body. It seems to me that if I laid my hand on the firm, rounded throat, it would be cold as marble to the touch. No, my friend, the blood does not flow beneath that ivory skin, the tide of life does not flush those delicate fibres, the purple veins that trace a network beneath the transparent amber of her brow and breast. Here the pulse seems to beat, there it is motionless, life and death are at strife in every detail; here you see a woman, there a statue, there again a corpse. Your creation is incomplete. You had only power to breathe a portion of your soul into your beloved work. The fire of Prometheus died out again and again in your hands; many a spot in your picture has not been touched by the divine flame."

"But how is it, dear master?" Porbus asked respectfully, while the young man with difficulty repressed his strong desire to beat the critic.

"Ah!" said the old man, "it is this! You have halted between two manners. You have hesitated between drawing and color, between the dogged attention to detail, the stiff precision of the German masters and the dazzling glow, the joyous exuberance of Italian painters. You have set yourself to imitate Hans

Holbein and Titian, Albrecht Dürer and Paul Veronese in a single picture. A magnificent ambition truly, but what has come of it? Your work has neither the severe charm of a dry execution nor the magical illusion of Italian *chiaroscuro*. Titian's rich golden coloring poured into Albrecht Dürer's austere outlines has shattered them, like molten bronze bursting through the mold that is not strong enough to hold it. In other places the outlines have held firm, imprisoning and obscuring the magnificent, glowing flood of Venetian color. The drawing of the face is not perfect, the coloring is not perfect; traces of that unlucky indecision are to be seen everywhere. Unless you felt strong enough to fuse the two opposed manners in the fire of your own genius, you should have cast in your lot boldly with the one or the other, and so have obtained the unity which simulates one of the conditions of life itself. Your work is only true in the centres; your outlines are false, they project nothing, there is no hint of anything behind them. There is truth here," said the old man, pointing to the breast of the Saint, "and again here," he went on, indicating the rounded shoulder. "But there," once more returning to the column of the throat, "everything is false. Let us go no further into detail; you would be disheartened."

The old man sat down on a stool, and remained a while without speaking, with his face buried in his hands.

"Yet I studied that throat from the life, dear master," Porbus began; "it happens sometimes, for our

misfortune, that real effects in nature look improbable when transferred to canvas—"

"The aim of art is not to copy nature, but to express it. You are not a servile copyist, but a poet!" cried the old man sharply, cutting Porbus short with an imperious gesture. "Otherwise a sculptor might make a plaster cast of a living woman and save himself all further trouble. Well, try to make a cast of your mistress's hand, and set up the thing before you. You will see a monstrosity, a dead mass, bearing no resemblance to the living hand; you would be compelled to have recourse to the chisel of a sculptor who, without making an exact copy, would represent for you its movement and its life. We must detect the spirit, the informing soul in the appearances of things and beings. Effects! What are effects but the accidents of life, not life itself? A hand, since I have taken that example, is not only a part of a body, it is the expression and extension of a thought that must be grasped and rendered. Neither painter nor poet nor sculptor may separate the effect from the cause, which are inevitably contained the one in the other. There begins the real struggle! Many a painter achieves success instinctively, unconscious of the task that is set before art. You draw a woman, yet you do not see her! Not so do you succeed in wresting Nature's secrets from her! You are reproducing mechanically the model that you copied in your master's studio. You do not penetrate far enough into the inmost secrets of the mystery of form; you do not seek with love enough and perseverance enough after the

form that baffles and eludes you. Beauty is a thing severe and unapproachable, never to be won by a languid lover. You must lie in wait for her coming and take her unawares, press her hard and clasp her in a tight embrace, and force her to yield. Form is a Proteus more intangible and more manifold than the Proteus of the legend; compelled, only after long wrestling, to stand forth manifest in his true aspect. Some of you are satisfied with the first shape, or at most by the second or the third that appears. Not thus wrestle the victors, the unvanquished painters who never suffer themselves to be deluded by all those treacherous shadow-shapes; they persevere till Nature at the last stands bare to their gaze, and her very soul is revealed.

"In this manner worked Rafael," said the old man, taking off his cap to express his reverence for the King of Art. "His transcendent greatness came of the intimate sense that, in him, seems as if it would shatter external form. Form in his figures (as with us) is a symbol, a means of communicating sensations, ideas, the vast imaginings of a poet. Every face is a whole world. The subject of the portrait appeared for him bathed in the light of a divine vision; it was revealed by an inner voice, the finger of God laid bare the sources of expression in the past of a whole life.

"You clothe your women in fair raiment of flesh, in gracious veiling of hair; but where is the blood, the source of passion and of calm, the cause of the particular effect? Why, this brown Egyptian of yours, my good Porbus, is a colorless creature! These figures

that you set before us are painted bloodless fantoms; and you call that painting, you call that art!

"Because you have made something more like a woman than a house, you think that you have set your fingers on the goal; you are quite proud that you need not to write *currus venustus* or *pulcher homo* beside your figures, as early painters were wont to do and you fancy that you have done wonders. Ah! my good friend, there is still something more to learn, and you will use up a great deal of chalk and cover many a canvas before you will learn it. Yes, truly, a woman carries her head in just such a way, so she holds her garments gathered into her hand; her eyes grow dreamy and soft with that expression of meek sweetness, and even so the quivering shadow of the lashes hovers upon her cheeks. It is all there, and yet it is not there. What is lacking? A nothing, but that nothing is everything.

"There you have the semblance of life, but you do not express its fulness and effluence, that indescribable something, perhaps the soul itself, that envelopes the outlines of the body like a haze; that flower of life, in short, that Titian and Rafael caught. Your utmost achievement hitherto has only brought you to the starting-point. You might now perhaps begin to do excellent work, but you grow weary all too soon; and the crowd admires, and those who know smile."

"Oh, Mabuse! oh, my master!" cried the strange speaker, "thou art a thief! Thou hast carried away the secret of life with thee!"

"Nevertheless," he began again, "this picture of

yours is worth more than all the paintings of that rascal Rubens, with his mountains of Flemish flesh raddled with vermilion, his torrents of red hair, his riot of color. You, at least have color there, and feeling and drawing—the three essentials in art."

The young man roused himself from his deep musings.

"Why, my good man, the Saint is sublime!" he cried. "There is a subtlety of imagination about those two figures, the Saint Mary and the Shipman, that can not be found among Italian masters; I do not know a single one of them capable of imagining the Shipman's hesitation."

"Did that little malapert come with you?" asked Porbus of the older man.

"Alas! master, pardon my boldness," cried the neophyte, and the color mounted to his face. "I am unknown—a dauber by instinct, and but lately come to this city—the fountain-head of all learning."

"Set to work," said Porbus, handing him a bit of red chalk and a sheet of paper.

The new-comer quickly sketched the Saint Mary line for line.

"Aha!" exclaimed the old man. "Your name?" he added.

The young man wrote "Nicolas Poussin" below the sketch.

"Not bad that for a beginning," said the strange speaker, who had discoursed so wildly. "I see that we can talk of art in your presence. I do not blame you for admiring Porbus's saint. In the eyes of the world

she is a masterpiece, and those alone who have been initiated into the inmost mysteries of art can discover her shortcomings. But it is worth while to give you the lesson, for you are able to understand it, so I will show you how little it needs to complete this picture. You must be all eyes, all attention, for it may be that such a chance of learning will never come in your way again.—Porbus! your palette."

Porbus went in search of palette and brushes. The little old man turned back his sleeves with impatient energy, seized the palette, covered with many hues, that Porbus handed to him, and snatched rather than took a handful of brushes of various sizes from the hands of his acquaintance. His pointed beard suddenly bristled—a menacing movement that expressed the prick of a lover's fancy. As he loaded his brush, he muttered between his teeth, "These paints are only fit to fling out of the window, together with the fellow who ground them, their crudeness and falseness are disgusting! How can one paint with this?"

He dipped the tip of the brush with feverish eagerness in the different pigments, making the circuit of the palette several times more quickly than the organist of a cathedral sweeps the octaves on the keyboard of his clavier for the "O Filii" at Easter.

Porbus and Poussin, on either side of the easel, stood stock-still, watching with intense interest.

"Look, young man," he began again, "see how three or four strokes of the brush and a thin glaze of blue let in the free air to play about the head of the poor Saint, who must have felt stifled and oppressed by the

close atmosphere! See how the drapery begins to flutter; you feel that it is lifted by the breeze! A moment ago it hung as heavily and stiffly as if it were held out by pins. Do you see how the satin sheen that I have just given to the breast rends the pliant, silken softness of a young girl's skin, and how the brown-red, blended with burnt ochre, brings warmth into the cold gray of the deep shadow where the blood lay congealed instead of coursing through the veins? Young man, young man, no master could teach you how to do this that I am doing before your eyes. Mabuse alone possessed the secret of giving life to his figures; Mabuse had but one pupil—that was I. I have had none, and I am old. You have sufficient intelligence to imagine the rest from the glimpses that I am giving you."

While the old man was speaking, he gave a touch here and there; sometimes two strokes of the brush, sometimes a single one; but every stroke told so well, that the whole picture seemed transfigured—the painting was flooded with light. He worked with such passionate fervor that beads of sweat gathered upon his bare forehead; he worked so quickly, in brief, impatient jerks, that it seemed to young Poussin as if some familiar spirit inhabiting the body of this strange being took a grotesque pleasure in making use of the man's hands against his own will. The unearthly glitter of his eyes, the convulsive movements that seemed like struggles, gave to this fancy a semblance of truth which could not but stir a young imagination. The old man continued, saying as he did so—

"Paf! paf! that is how to lay it on, young man!—

Little touches! come and bring a glow into those icy cold tones for me! Just so! Pon! pon! pon!" and those parts of the picture that he had pointed out as cold and lifeless flushed with warmer hues, a few bold strokes of color brought all the tones of the picture into the required harmony with the glowing tints of the Egyptian, and the differences in temperament vanished.

"Look you, youngster, the last touches make the picture. Porbus has given it a hundred strokes for every one of mine. No one thanks us for what lies beneath. Bear that in mind."

At last the restless spirit stopped, and turning to Porbus and Poussin, who were speechless with admiration, he spoke—

"This is not as good as my 'Belle Noiseuse'; still one might put one's name to such a thing as this.—Yes, I would put my name to it," he added, rising to reach for a mirror, in which he looked at the picture.—"And now," he said, "will you both come and breakfast with me? I have a smoked ham and some very fair wine! . . . Eh! eh! the times may be bad, but we can still have some talk about art! We can talk like equals. . . . Here is a little fellow who has aptitude," he added, laying a hand on Nicolas Poussin's shoulder.

In this way the stranger became aware of the threadbare condition of the Norman's doublet. He drew a leather purse from his girdle, felt in it, found two gold coins, and held them out.

"I will buy your sketch," he said.

"Take it," said Porbus, as he saw the other start and flush with embarrassment, for Poussin had the pride of poverty. "Pray, take it; he has a couple of king's ransoms in his pouch!"

The three came down together from the studio, and, talking of art by the way, reached a picturesque wooden house hard by the Pont Saint-Michel. Poussin wondered a moment at its ornament, at the knocker, at the frames of the casements, at the scroll-work designs, and in the next he stood in a vast low-ceiled room. A table, covered with tempting dishes, stood near the blazing fire, and (luck unhoped for) he was in the company of two great artists full of genial good humor.

"Do not look too long at that canvas, young man," said Porbus, when he saw that Poussin was standing, struck with wonder, before a painting. "You would fall a victim to despair."

It was the "Adam" painted by Mabuse to purchase his release from the prison where his creditors had so long kept him. And, as a matter of fact, the figure stood out so boldly and convincingly, that Nicolas Poussin began to understand the real meaning of the words poured out by the old artist, who was himself looking at the picture with apparent satisfaction, but without enthusiasm. "I have done better than that!" he seemed to be saying to himself.

"There is life in it," he said aloud; "in that respect my poor master here surpassed himself, but there is some lack of truth in the background. The man lives indeed; he is rising, and will come toward us; but the

atmosphere, the sky, the air, the breath of the breeze—you look and feel for them, but they are not there. And then the man himself is, after all, only a man! Ah! but the one man in the world who came direct from the hands of God must have had a something divine about him that is wanting here. Mabuse himself would grind his teeth and say so when he was not drunk."

Poussin looked from the speaker to Porbus, and from Porbus to the speaker, with restless curiosity. He went up to the latter to ask for the name of their host; but the painter laid a finger on his lips with an air of mystery. The young man's interest was excited; he kept silence, but hoped that sooner or later some word might be let fall that would reveal the name of his entertainer. It was evident that he was a man of talent and very wealthy, for Porbus listened to him respectfully, and the vast room was crowded with marvels of art.

A magnificent portrait of a woman, hung against the dark oak panels of the wall, next caught Poussin's attention.

"What a glorious Giorgione!" he cried.

"No," said his host, "it is an early daub of mine—"

"Gramercy! I am in the abode of the god of painting, it seems!" cried Poussin ingenuously.

The old man smiled as if he had long grown familiar with such praise.

"Master Frenhofer!" said Porbus, "do you think you could spare me a little of your capital Rhine wine?"

"A couple of pipes!" answered his host; "one to discharge a debt, for the pleasure of seeing your pretty sinner, the other as a present from a friend."

"Ah! if I had my health," returned Porbus, "and if you would but let me see your 'Belle Noiseuse,' I would paint some great picture, with breadth in it and depth; the figures should be life-size."

"Let you see my work!" cried the painter in agitation. "No, no! it is not perfect yet; something still remains for me to do. Yesterday, in the dusk," he said, "I thought I had reached the end. Her eyes seemed moist, the flesh quivered, something stirred the tresses of her hair. She breathed! But though I have succeeded in reproducing Nature's roundness and relief on the flat surface of the canvas, this morning, by daylight, I found out my mistake. Ah! to achieve that glorious result I have studied the works of the great masters of color, stripping off coat after coat of color from Titian's canvas, analyzing the pigments of the king of light. Like that sovereign painter, I began the face in a slight tone with a supple and fat paste—for shadow is but an accident; bear that in mind, youngster!—Then I began afresh, and by half-tones and thin glazes of color less and less transparent, I gradually deepened the tints to the deepest black of the strongest shadows. An ordinary painter makes his shadows something entirely different in nature from the high lights; they are wood or brass, or what you will, anything but flesh in shadow. You feel that even if those figures were to alter their position, those shadow stains would never be cleansed

away, those parts of the picture would never glow with light.

"I have escaped one mistake, into which the most famous painters have sometimes fallen; in my canvas the whiteness shines through the densest and most persistent shadow. I have not marked out the limits of my figure in hard, dry outlines, and brought every least anatomical detail into prominence (like a host of dunces, who fancy that they can draw because they can trace a line elaborately smooth and clean), for the human body is not contained within the limits of line. In this the sculptor can approach the truth more nearly than we painters. Nature's way is a complicated succession of curve within curve. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as drawing.—Do not laugh, young man; strange as that speech may seem to you, you will understand the truth in it some day.—A line is a method of expressing the effect of light upon an object; but there are no lines in Nature, everything is solid. We draw by modeling, that is to say, that we disengage an object from its setting; the distribution of the light alone gives to a body the appearance by which we know it. So I have not defined the outlines; I have suffused them with a haze of half-tints warm or golden, in such a sort that you can not lay your finger on the exact spot where background and contours meet. Seen from near, the picture looks a blur; it seems to lack definition; but step back two paces, and the whole thing becomes clear, distinct, and solid; the body stands out; the rounded form comes into re-

lief; you feel that the air plays round it. And yet— I am not satisfied; I have misgivings. Perhaps one ought not to draw a single line; perhaps it would be better to attack the face from the centre, taking the highest prominences first, proceeding from them through the whole range of shadows to the heaviest of all. Is not this the method of the sun, the divine painter of the world? Oh, Nature, Nature! who has surprised thee, fugitive? But, after all, too much knowledge, like ignorance, brings you to a negation. I have doubts about my work."

There was a pause. Then the old man spoke again. "I have been at work upon it for ten years, young man; but what are ten short years in a struggle with Nature? Do we know how long Sir Pygmalion wrought at the one statue that came to life?"

The old man fell into deep musings, and gazed before him with wide unseeing eyes, while he played unheedingly with his knife.

"Look, he is in conversation with his *dæmon*!" murmured Porbus.

At the word, Nicolas Poussin felt himself carried away by an unaccountable accession of artist's curiosity. For him the old man, at once intent and inert, the seer with the unseeing eyes, became something more than a man — a fantastic spirit living in a mysterious world, and countless vague thoughts awoke within his soul. The effect of this species of fascination upon his mind can no more be described in words than the passionate longing awakened in an exile's heart by the song that recalls his home. He thought

of the scorn that the old man affected to display for the noblest efforts of art, of his wealth, his manners, of the deference paid to him by Porbus. The mysterious picture, the work of patience on which he had wrought so long in secret, was doubtless a work of genius, for the head of the Virgin which young Poussin had admired so frankly was beautiful even beside Mabuse's "Adam"—there was no mistaking the imperial manner of one of the princes of art. Everything combined to set the old man beyond the limits of human nature.

Out of the wealth of fancies in Nicolas Poussin's brain an idea grew, and gathered shape and clearness. He saw in this supernatural being a complete type of the artist nature, a nature mocking and kindly, barren and prolific, an erratic spirit intrusted with great and manifold powers which she too often abuses, leading sober reason, the Philistine, and sometimes even the amateur forth into a stony wilderness where they see nothing; but the white-winged maiden herself, wild as her fancies may be, finds epics there and castles and works of art. For Poussin, the enthusiast, the old man, was suddenly transfigured, and became Art incarnate, Art with its mysteries, its vehement passion and its dreams.

"Yes, my dear Porbus," Frenhofer continued, "hitherto I have never found a flawless model, a body with outlines of perfect beauty, the carnations—Ah! where does she live?" he cried, breaking in upon himself, "the undiscoverable Venus of the older time, for whom we have sought so often, only to find the

scattered gleams of her beauty here and there? Oh! to behold once and for one moment, Nature grown perfect and divine, the Ideal at last, I would give all that I possess. . . . Nay, Beauty divine, I would go to seek thee in the dim land of the dead; like Orpheus, I would go down into the Hades of Art to bring back the life of art from among the shadows of death."

"We can go now," said Porbus to Poussin. "He neither hears nor sees us any longer."

"Let us go to his studio," said young Poussin, wondering greatly.

"Oh! the old fox takes care that no one shall enter it. His treasures are so carefully guarded that it is impossible for us to come at them. I have not waited for your suggestion and your fancy to attempt to lay hands on this mystery by force."

"So there is a mystery?"

"Yes," answered Porbus. "Old Frenhofer is the only pupil Mabuse would take. Frenhofer became the painter's friend, deliverer, and father; he sacrificed the greater part of his fortune to enable Mabuse to indulge in riotous extravagance, and in return Mabuse bequeathed to him the secret of relief, the power of giving to his figures the wonderful life, the flower of Nature, the eternal despair of art, the secret which Mabuse knew so well that one day when he had sold the flowered brocade suit in which he should have appeared at the Entry of Charles V, he accompanied his master in a suit of paper painted to resemble the brocade. The peculiar richness and splendor of the

stuff struck the Emperor; he complimented the old drunkard's patron on the artist's appearance, and so the trick was brought to light. Frenhofer is a passionate enthusiast, who sees above and beyond other painters. He has meditated profoundly on color, and the absolute truth of line; but by the way of much research he has come to doubt the very existence of the objects of his search. He says, in moments of despondency, that there is no such thing as drawing, and that by means of lines we can only reproduce geometrical figures; but that is overshooting the mark, for by outline and shadow you can reproduce form without any color at all, which shows that our art, like Nature, is composed of an infinite number of elements. Drawing gives you the skeleton, the anatomical framework, and color puts the life into it; but life without the skeleton is even more incomplete than a skeleton without life. But there is something else truer still, and it is this—for painters, practise and observation are everything; and when theories and poetical ideas begin to quarrel with the brushes, the end is doubt, as has happened with our good friend, who is half crack-brained enthusiast, half painter. A sublime painter! but unluckily for him, he was born to riches, and so he has leisure to follow his fancies. Do not you follow his example! Work! painters have no business to think, except brush in hand."

"We will find a way into his studio!" cried Poussin confidently. He had ceased to heed Porbus's remarks. The other smiled at the young painter's enthusiasm,

asked him to come to see him again, and they parted. Nicholas Poussin went slowly back to the Rue de la Harpe, and passed the modest hostlery where he was lodging without noticing it. A feeling of uneasiness prompted him to hurry up the crazy staircase till he reached a room at the top, a quaint, airy recess under the steep, high-pitched roof common among houses in old Paris. In the one dingy window of the place sat a young girl, who sprang up at once when she heard some one at the door; it was the prompting of love; she had recognized the painter's touch on the latch.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked.

"The matter is . . . is . . . Oh! I have felt that I am a painter! Until to-day I have had doubts, but now I believe in myself! There is the making of a great man in me! Never mind, Gillette, we shall be rich and happy! There is gold at the tips of those brushes—"

He broke off suddenly. The joy faded from his powerful and earnest face as he compared his vast hopes with his slender resources. The walls were covered with sketches in chalk on sheets of common paper. There were but four canvases in the room. Colors were very costly, and the young painter's palette was almost bare. Yet in the midst of his poverty he possessed and was conscious of the possession of inexhaustible treasures of the heart, of a devouring genius equal to all the tasks that lay before him.

He had been brought to Paris by a nobleman among his friends, or perchance by the consciousness of his

powers; and in Paris he had found a mistress, one of those noble and generous souls who choose to suffer by a great man's side, who share his struggles and strive to understand his fancies, accepting their lot of poverty and love as bravely and dauntlessly as other women will set themselves to bear the burden of riches and make a parade of their insensibility. The smile that stole over Gillette's lips filled the garret with golden light, and rivaled the brightness of the sun in heaven. The sun, moreover, does not always shine in heaven, whereas Gillette was always in the garret, absorbed in her passion, occupied by Poussin's happiness and sorrow, consoling the genius which found an outlet in love before art engrossed it.

"Listen, Gillette. Come here."

The girl obeyed joyously, and sprang upon the painter's knee. Hers was perfect grace and beauty, and the loveliness of spring; she was adorned with all luxuriant fairness of outward form, lighted up by the glow of a fair soul within.

"Oh! God," he cried; "I shall never dare to tell her—"

"A secret?" she cried; "I must know it!"

Poussin was absorbed in his dreams.

"Do tell it me!"

"Gillette . . . poor beloved heart! . . ."

"Oh! do you want something of me?"

"Yes."

"If you wish me to sit once more for you as I did the other day," she continued with playful petulance, "I will never consent to do such a thing again, for

your eyes say nothing all the while. You do not think of me at all, and yet you look at me—"

"Would you rather have me draw another woman?"

"Perhaps—if she were very ugly," she said.

"Well," said Poussin gravely, "and if, for the sake of my fame to come, if to make me a great painter, you must sit to some one else?"

"You may try me," she said; "you know quite well that I would not."

Poussin's head sank on her breast; he seemed to be overpowered by some intolerable joy or sorrow.

"Listen," she cried, plucking at the sleeve of Poussin's threadbare doublet. "I told you, Nick, that I would lay down my life for you; but I never promised you that I in my lifetime would lay down my love."

"Your love?" cried the young artist.

"If I showed myself thus to another, you would love me no longer, and I should feel myself unworthy of you. Obedience to your fancies was a natural and simple thing, was it not? Even against my own will, I am glad and even proud to do thy dear will. But for another, out upon it!"

"Forgive me, my Gillette," said the painter, falling upon his knees; "I would rather be beloved than famous. You are fairer than success and honors. There, fling the pencils away, and burn these sketches! I have made a mistake. I was meant to love and not to paint. Perish art and all its secrets!"

Gillette looked admiringly at him, in an ecstasy of happiness! She was triumphant; she felt instinctively

that art was laid aside for her sake, and flung like a grain of incense at her feet.

"Yet he is only an old man," Poussin continued; "for him you would be a woman, and nothing more. You—so perfect!"

"I must love you indeed!" she cried, ready to sacrifice even love's scruples to the lover who had given up so much for her sake; "but I should bring about my own ruin. Ah! to ruin myself, to lose everything for you! . . . It is a very glorious thought! Ah! but you will forget me. Oh! what evil thought is this that has come to you?"

"I love you, and yet I thought of it," he said, with something like remorse. "Am I so base a wretch?"

"Let us consult Père Hardouin," she said.

"No, no! Let it be a secret between us."

"Very well; I will do it. But you must not be there," she said. "Stay at the door with your dagger in your hand; and if I call, rush in and kill the painter."

Poussin forgot everything but art. He held Gillette tightly in his arms.

"He loves me no longer!" thought Gillette when she was alone. She repented of her resolution already.

But to these misgivings there soon succeeded a sharper pain, and she strove to banish a hideous thought that arose in her own heart. It seemed to her that her own love had grown less already, with a vague suspicion that the painter had fallen somewhat in her eyes.

II

CATHERINE LESCAULT

Three months after Poussin and Porbus met, the latter went to see Master Frenhofer. The old man had fallen a victim to one of those profound and spontaneous fits of discouragement that are caused, according to medical logicians, by indigestion, flatulence, fever, or enlargement of the spleen; or, if you take the opinion of the Spiritualists, by the imperfections of our mortal nature. The good man had simply overworked himself in putting the finishing touches to his mysterious picture. He was lounging in a huge carved oak chair, covered with black leather, and did not change his listless attitude, but glanced at Porbus like a man who has settled down into low spirits.

"Well, master," said Porbus, "was the ultramarine bad that you sent for to Bruges? Is the new white difficult to grind? Is the oil poor, or are the brushes recalcitrant?"

"Alas!" cried the old man, "for a moment I thought that my work was finished, but I am sure that I am mistaken in certain details, and I can not rest until I have cleared my doubts. I am thinking of traveling. I am going to Turkey, to Greece, to Asia, in quest of a model, so as to compare my picture with the different living forms of Nature. Perhaps," and a smile of contentment stole over his face, "perhaps I have Nature herself up there. At times I am half afraid that a breath may waken her, and that she will escape me."

He rose to his feet as if to set out at once.

"Aha!" said Porbus, "I have come just in time to save you the trouble and expense of a journey."

"What?" asked Frenhofer in amazement.

"Young Poussin is loved by a woman of incomparable and flawless beauty. But, dear master, if he consents to lend her to you, at the least you ought to let us see your work."

The old man stood motionless and completely dazed.

"What!" he cried piteously at last, "show you my creation, my bride? Rend the veil that has kept my happiness sacred? It would be an infamous profanation. For ten years I have lived with her; she is mine, mine alone; she loves me. Has she not smiled at me, at each stroke of the brush upon the canvas? She has a soul—the soul that I have given her. She would blush if any eyes but mine should rest on her. To exhibit her! Where is the husband, the lover so vile as to bring the woman he loves to dishonor? When you paint a picture for the court, you do not put your whole soul into it; to courtiers you sell lay figures duly colored. My painting is no painting, it is a sentiment, a passion. She was born in my studio, there she must dwell in maiden solitude, and only when clad can she issue thence. Poetry and women only lay the last veil aside for their lovers. Have we Rafael's model, Ariosto's Angelica, Dante's Beatrice? Nay, only their form and semblance. But this picture, locked away above in my studio, is an exception in our art. It is not a canvas, it is a woman—a woman with whom I talk. I share her thoughts, her tears,

her laughter. Would you have me fling aside these ten years of happiness like a cloak? Would you have me cease at once to be father, lover, and creator? She is not a creature, but a creation.

"Bring your young painter here. I will give him my treasures; I will give him pictures by Correggio and Michelangelo and Titian; I will kiss his foot-prints in the dust; but make him my rival! Shame on me. Ah! ah! I am a lover first, and then a painter. Yes, with my latest sigh I could find strength to burn my 'Belle Noiseuse'; but—compel her to endure the gaze of a stranger, a young man and a painter!—Ah! no, no! I would kill him on the morrow who should sully her with a glance! Nay, you, my friend, I would kill you with my own hands in a moment if you did not kneel in reverence before her! Now, will you have me submit my idol to the careless eyes and senseless criticisms of fools? Ah! love is a mystery; it can only live hidden in the depths of the heart. You say, even to your friend, 'Behold her whom I love,' and there is an end of love."

The old man seemed to have grown young again; there was light and life in his eyes, and a faint flush of red in his pale face. His hands shook. Porbus was so amazed by the passionate vehemence of Frenhofer's words that he knew not what to reply to this utterance of an emotion as strange as it was profound. Was Frenhofer sane or mad? Had he fallen a victim to some freak of the artist's fancy? or were these ideas of his produced by the strange light-headedness which comes over us during the long travail of

a work of art. Would it be possible to come to terms with this singular passion?

Harassed by all these doubts, Porbus spoke—"Is it not woman for woman?" he said. "Does not Poussin submit his mistress to your gaze?"

"What is she?" retorted the other. "A mistress who will be false to him sooner or later. Mine will be faithful to me forever."

"Well, well," said Porbus, "let us say no more about it. But you may die before you will find such a flawless beauty as hers, even in Asia, and then your picture will be left unfinished.

"Oh! it is finished," said Frenhofer. "Standing before it you would think that it was a living woman lying on the velvet couch beneath the shadow of the curtains. Perfumes are burning on a golden tripod by her side. You would be tempted to lay your hand upon the tassel of the cord that holds back the curtains; it would seem to you that you saw her breast rise and fall as she breathed; that you beheld the living Catherine Lescault, the beautiful courtezan whom men called 'La Belle Noiseuse.' And yet—if I could but be sure—"

"Then go to Asia," returned Porbus, noticing a certain indecision in Frenhofer's face. And with that Porbus made a few steps toward the door.

By that time Gillette and Nicolas Poussin had reached Frenhofer's house. The girl drew away her arm from her lover's as she stood on the threshold, and shrank back as if some presentiment flashed through her mind.

"Oh! what have I come to do here?" she asked of her lover in low vibrating tones, with her eyes fixed on his.

"Gillette, I have left you to decide; I am ready to obey you in everything. You are my conscience and my glory. Go home again; I shall be happier, perhaps, if you do not—"

"Am I my own when you speak to me like that? No, no; I am like a child.—Come," she added, seemingly with a violent effort; "if our love dies, if I plant a long regret in my heart, your fame will be the reward of my obedience to your wishes, will it not? Let us go in. I shall still live on as a memory on your palette; that shall be life for me afterward."

The door opened, and the two lovers encountered Porbus, who was surprised by the beauty of Gillette, whose eyes were full of tears. He hurried her, trembling from head to foot, into the presence of the old painter.

"Here!" he cried, "is she not worth all the masterpieces in the world!"

Frenhofer trembled. There stood Gillette in the artless and childlike attitude of some timid and innocent Georgian, carried off by brigands, and confronted with a slave merchant. A shamefaced red flushed her face, her eyes drooped, her hands hung by her side, her strength seemed to have failed her, her tears protested against this outrage. Poussin cursed himself in despair that he should have brought his fair treasure from its hiding-place. The lover over. came the artist, and countless doubts assailed Poussin's

heart when he saw youth dawn in the old man's eyes, as, like a painter, he discerned every line of the form hidden beneath the young girl's vesture. Then the lover's savage jealousy awoke.

"Gillette!" he cried, "let us go."

The girl turned joyously at the cry and the tone in which it was uttered, raised her eyes to his, looked at him, and fled to his arms.

"Ah! then you love me," she cried; "you love me!" and she burst into tears.

She had spirit enough to suffer in silence, but she had no strength to hide her joy.

"Oh! leave her with me for one moment," said the old painter, "and you shall compare her with my Catherine . . . yes—I consent."

Frenhofer's words likewise came from him like a lover's cry. His vanity seemed to be engaged for his semblance of womanhood; he anticipated the triumph of the beauty of his own creation over the beauty of the living girl.

"Do not give him time to change his mind!" cried Porbus, striking Poussin on the shoulder. "The flower of love soon fades, but the flower of art is immortal."

"Then am I only a woman now for him?" said Gillette. She was watching Poussin and Porbus closely.

She raised her head proudly; she glanced at Frenhofer, and her eyes flashed; then as she saw how her lover had fallen again to gazing at the portrait which he had taken at first for a Giorgione—

"Ah!" she cried; "let us go up to the studio. He never gave me such a look."

The sound of her voice recalled Poussin from his dreams.

"Old man," he said, "do you see this blade? I will plunge it into your heart at the first cry from this young girl; I will set fire to your house, and no one shall leave it alive. Do you understand?"

Nicolas Poussin scowled; every word was a menace. Gillette took comfort from the young painter's bearing, and yet more from that gesture, and almost forgave him for sacrificing her to his art and his glorious future.

Porbus and Poussin stood at the door of the studio and looked at each other in silence. At first the painter of the Saint Mary of Egypt hazarded some exclamations: "Ah! she has taken off her clothes; he told her to come into the light—he is comparing the two!" but the sight of the deep distress in Poussin's face suddenly silenced him; and though old painters no longer feel these scruples, so petty in the presence of art, he admired them because they were so natural and gracious in the lover. The young man kept his hand on the hilt of his dagger, and his ear was almost glued to the door. The two men standing in the shadow might have been conspirators waiting for the hour when they might strike down a tyrant.

"Come in, come in," cried the old man. He was radiant with delight. "My work is perfect. I can show her now with pride. Never shall painter,

brushes, colors, light, and canvas produce a rival for 'Catherine Lescault,' the beautiful courtezan!"

Porbus and Poussin, burning with eager curiosity, hurried into a vast studio. Everything was in disorder and covered with dust, but they saw a few pictures here and there upon the wall. They stopped first of all in admiration before the life-size figure of a woman partially draped.

"Oh! never mind that," said Frenhofer; "that is a rough daub that I made, a study, a pose, it is nothing. These are my failures," he went on, indicating the enchanting compositions upon the walls of the studio.

This scorn for such works of art struck Porbus and Poussin dumb with amazement. They looked round for the picture of which he had spoken, and could not discover it.

"Look here!" said the old man. His hair was disordered, his face aglow with a more than human exaltation, his eyes glittered, he breathed hard like a young lover frenzied by love.

"Aha!" he cried, "you did not expect to see such perfection! You are looking for a picture, and you see a woman before you. There is such depth in that canvas, the atmosphere is so true that you can not distinguish it from the air that surrounds us. Where is art? Art has vanished, it is invisible! It is the form of a living girl that you see before you. Have I not caught the very hues of life, the spirit of the living line that defines the figure? Is there not the effect produced there like that which all natural objects present in the atmosphere about them, or fishes in the

water? Do you see how the figure stands out against the background? Does it not seem to you that you pass your hand along the back? But then for seven years I studied and watched how the daylight blends with the objects on which it falls. And the hair, the light pours over it like a flood, does it not? . . . Ah! she breathed, I am sure that she breathed! Her breast—ah, see! Who would not fall on his knees before her? Her pulses throb. She will rise to her feet. Wait!"

"Do you see anything?" Poussin asked of Porbus.

"No . . . do you?"

"I see nothing."

The two painters left the old man to his ecstasy, and tried to ascertain whether the light that fell full upon the canvas had in some way neutralized all the effect for them. They moved to the right and left of the picture; they came in front, bending down and standing upright by turns.

"Yes, yes, it is really canvas," said Frenhofer, who mistook the nature of this minute investigation.

"Look! the canvas is on a stretcher, here is the easel; indeed, here are my colors, my brushes," and he took up a brush and held it out to them, all unsuspicious of their thought.

"The old *lansquenet* is laughing at us," said Poussin, coming once more toward the supposed picture. "I can see nothing there but confused masses of color and a multitude of fantastical lines that go to make a dead wall of paint."

"We are mistaken, look!" said Porbus.

In a corner of the canvas, as they came nearer, they distinguished a bare foot emerging from the chaos of color, half-tints and vague shadows that made up a dim, formless fog. Its living delicate beauty held them spellbound. This fragment that had escaped an incomprehensible, slow, and gradual destruction seemed to them like the Parian marble torso of some Venus emerging from the ashes of a ruined town.

"There is a woman beneath," exclaimed Porbus, calling Poussin's attention to the coats of paint with which the old artist had overlaid and concealed his work in the quest of perfection.

Both artists turned involuntarily to Frenhofer. They began to have some understanding, vague though it was, of the ecstasy in which he lived.

"He believes it in all good faith," said Porbus.

"Yes, my friend," said the old man, rousing himself from his dreams, "it needs faith, faith in art, and you must live for long with your work to produce such a creation. What toil some of those shadows have cost me. Look! there is a faint shadow there upon the cheek beneath the eyes—if you saw that on a human face, it would seem to you that you could never render it with paint. Do you think that that effect has not cost unheard-of toil?

"But not only so, dear Porbus. Look closely at my work, and you will understand more clearly what I was saying as to methods of modeling and outline. Look at the high lights on the bosom, and see how by touch on touch, thickly laid on, I have raised the sur-

face so that it catches the light itself and blends it with the lustrous whiteness of the high lights, and how by an opposite process, by flattening the surface of the paint, and leaving no trace of the passage of the brush, I have succeeded in softening the contours of my figures and enveloping them in half-tints until the very idea of drawing, of the means by which the effect is produced, fades away, and the picture has the roundness and relief of nature. Come closer. You will see the manner of working better; at a little distance it can not be seen. There! Just there, it is, I think, very plainly to be seen," and with the tip of his brush he pointed out a patch of transparent color to the two painters.

Porbus, laying a hand on the old artist's shoulder, turned to Poussin with a "Do you know that in him we see a very great painter?"

"He is even more of a poet than a painter," Poussin answered gravely.

"There," Porbus continued, as he touched the canvas, "lies the utmost limit of our art on earth."

"Beyond that point it loses itself in the skies," said Poussin.

"What joys lie there on this piece of canvas!" exclaimed Porbus.

The old man, deep in his own musings, smiled at the woman he alone beheld, and did not hear.

"But sooner or later he will find out that there is nothing there!" cried Poussin.

"Nothing on my canvas!" said Frenhofer, looking in turn at either painter and at his picture.

"What have you done?" muttered Porbus, turning to Poussin.

The old man clutched the young painter's arm and said, "Do you see nothing? clodpate! Huguenot! varlet! cullion! What brought you here into my studio? —My good Porbus," he went on, as he turned to the painter, "are you also making a fool of me? Answer! I am your friend. Tell me, have I ruined my picture after all?"

Porbus hesitated and said nothing, but there was such intolerable anxiety in the old man's white face that he pointed to the easel.

"Look!" he said.

Frenhofer looked for a moment at his picture, and staggered back.

"Nothing! nothing! After ten years of work . . ." He sat down and wept.

"So I am a dotard, a madman, I have neither talent nor power! I am only a rich man, who works for his own pleasure, and makes no progress. I have done nothing after all!"

He looked through his tears at his picture. Suddenly he rose and stood proudly before the two painters.

"By the body and blood of Christ," he cried with flashing eyes, "you are jealous! You would have me think that my picture is a failure because you want to steal her from me! Ah! I see her, I see her," he cried "she is marvelously beautiful . . ."

At that moment Poussin heard the sound of weeping; Gillette was crouching forgotten in a corner. All

at once the painter once more became the lover. "What is it, my angel?" he asked her.

"Kill me!" she sobbed. "I must be a vile thing if I love you still, for I despise you. . . . I admire you, and I hate you! I love you, and I feel that I hate you even now!"

While Gillette's words sounded in Poussin's ears, Frenhofer drew a green serge covering over his "Catherine" with the sober deliberation of a jeweler who locks his drawers when he suspects his visitors to be expert thieves. He gave the two painters a profoundly astute glance that expressed to the full his suspicions and his contempt for them, saw them out of his studio with impetuous haste and in silence, until from the threshold of his house he bade them "Good-by, my young friends!"

That farewell struck a chill of dread into the two painters. Porbus, in anxiety, went again on the morrow to see Frenhofer, and learned that he had died in the night after burning his canvases.

PARIS, *February, 1832.*

THE PRICE OF A LIFE

BY AUGUSTIN EUGÈNE SCRIBE

Eugène Scribe was born in 1791, at Paris, where he died in 1861. He soon tired of the law as a profession and between 1820 and 1825 wrote farces and little comedies.

Then begins the second period of his career, during which he wrote the librettos, masterpieces themselves, of the familiar operas, "La Dame Blanche," "Robert Le Diable," "Les Huguenots," "Fra Diavolo," etc., and the serious comedy "Valerie," in which he shows a most delightful and unique genius in prolonging interestingly his situations. With "Bertrand and Raton," a five-act comedy, produced at the Théâtre Français in 1833, he commenced a series of historical and political comedies. In all, Scribe wrote some three hundred and fifty pieces. In 1836 he was elected a member of the Academy.

In style, Scribe is delicate and graceful, with an indescribable "charm," as in his first manner, or lively and natural, as in his second; but he is not to be relied upon for the truth.

THE PRICE OF A LIFE

BY EUGÈNE SCRIBE

JOSEPH, opening the door of the salon, came to tell us that the post-chaise was ready. My mother and my sister threw themselves into my arms. "There is yet time," said they. "It is not too late. Give up this journey and remain with us." I replied: "My mother, I am a gentleman. I am twenty years old, my country needs me, I must win fame and renown; be it in the army, be it at court, I must be heard of, men must speak of me."

"And when you are far away, tell me, Bernard, what will become of me, your old mother?"

"You will be happy and proud to hear of your son's successes—"

"And if you are killed in some battle?"

"What matters it? What is life? Only a dream. One dreams only of glory at twenty, and when one is a gentleman; but do not fear, you will see me return to you in a few years, a colonel, a maréchal-de-camp, or, better still, with a fine position at Versailles."

"Indeed! When will that be?"

"It will come, and I shall be respected and envied by all—and then—every one will take off his hat to me—and then—I will marry my cousin Henriette, and I will find good husbands for my sisters, and we

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shall all live together tranquil and happy on my estates in Brittany."

"Why not do all that to-day, my son? Has not your father left you the finest fortune in the country? Where is there, for ten leagues around, a richer domain, or a more beautiful château than that of Roche-Bernard? Are you not loved and respected by your vassals? When you walk through the village, is there a single one who fails to salute you and take off his hat? Do not leave us, my son; remain here with your friends, near your sisters, near your old mother, whom perhaps you will not find here when you return. Do not waste in search of vain glory or abridge by cares and torments of all kinds the days which already go so swiftly. Life is sweet, my child, and the sun of Brittany is so bright!" So saying she led me to the open window and pointed to the beautiful avenues of my park; the grand old chestnut trees were in full bloom, and the air was sweet with the fragrance of the lilacs and the honeysuckles, whose leaves sparkled in the sunlight.

All the house-servants awaited me in the anteroom. They were so sad and quiet that they seemed to say to me: "Do not go, young master, do not go." Hortense, my eldest sister, pressed me in her arms, and my little sister Amélie, who was in one corner of the room occupied in looking at some engravings in a volume of La Fontaine, came to me, and, handing me the book, cried: "Read, read, my brother!" It was the fable of "The Two Pigeons."

But I repulsed them all and said: "I am twenty

years old. *Je suis gentilhomme.* I *must* in honor and glory. Let me go." And I hastened to the court-yard, and got into the post-chaise, when a woman appeared at the landing of the stairs. It was my beautiful cousin Henriette! She did not weep, she did not say a word—but, pale and trembling, she could scarcely stand. She waved me an adieu with her white handkerchief, then fell unconscious. I ran to her, raised her, put my arms around her, and swore to her eternal love; and the moment she recovered consciousness, leaving her in my mother's care, I ran to the chaise, and, without turning my head, drove away.

If I had looked at Henriette I might have wavered. A few moments afterward we were rolling along the grand route.

For a long while I thought of nothing but Henriette, my mother, and my sisters, and all the happiness I had left behind me; but these thoughts were effaced in the measure that the towers of Roche-Bernard faded from my view, and soon ambitious dreams of glory spread over my spirit. What projects! What *châteaux en Espagne!* What glorious deeds I performed in that chaise! Riches, honors, dignities, rewards of all kinds! I refused nothing. I merited them, and I accepted all; at last, elevating myself as I advanced on my journey, I was duke—governor of a province—and no less a personage than a maréchal of France when I arrived in the evening at my destination. The voice of my valet, who addressed me modestly as Monsieur le Chevalier. forced me to abdi-

cate for the time being, and I was obliged to return to the earth and to myself.

The following day I continued my journey and dreamed the same dreams, for the way was long. At last we arrived at Sédan, where I expected to visit the Duc de C——, an old friend of our family. He would (I thought) surely take me with him to Paris, where he was expected at the end of the month, and then he would present me at Versailles, and obtain for me, at the very least, a company of dragoons.

I arrived in Sédan in the evening—too late to present myself at the château of my friend (which was some distance from the city), so I delayed my visit until the next day, and put up at the "Armes de France," the best hotel in the place.

I supped at the table d'hôte and asked the way to take on the morrow to the château of the Duc de C——.

"Any one can show you," said a young officer who sat near me, "for it is well known the whole country round. It was in this château that died a great warrior, a very celebrated man—Maréchal Fabert!" Then the conversation fell, as was natural between young military men, on the Maréchal Fabert. They spoke of his battles, his exploits, of his modesty, which caused him to refuse letters of nobility and the collar of his order offered him by Louis XIV. Above all, they marveled at the good fortune which comes to some men. What inconceivable happiness for a simple soldier to rise to the rank of maréchal of France—he, a man of no family, the son of a printer! They could

cite no other case similar to his, and the masses did not hesitate to ascribe his elevation to supernatural causes. It was said that he had employed magic from his childhood, that he was a sorcerer, and that he had a compact with the devil; and our old landlord, who had all the credulity of our Breton peasants, swore to us that in this château of the Duc de C——, where Fabert died, there had frequently been seen a black man whom no one knew; and that the servants had seen him enter Fabert's chamber and disappear, carrying with him the soul of the maréchal, which he had bought some years before, and which, therefore, belonged to him; and that even now, in the month of May, on the anniversary of Fabert's death, one can see at night a black man bearing a light, which is Fabert's soul.

This story amused us at dessert, and we gaily drank a bottle of champagne to the familiar demon of Fabert, praying for his patronage, and help to gain victories like those of Collioure and of La Marfée.

The next day I arose early and set out for the château, which proved to be an immense Gothic manor house, having nothing very remarkable about it. At any other time I would not have viewed it with any great interest; but now I gazed at it with feelings of curiosity as I recalled the strange story told us by the landlord of the "Armes de France."

The door was opened by an old valet, and when I told him I wished to see the Duc de C——, he replied that he did not know whether his master was visible or not, or if he would receive me. I gave him my

name and he went away, leaving me alone in a very large and gloomy hall, decorated with trophies of the chase and family portraits. I waited some time, but he did not return. The silence was almost oppressive; I began to grow impatient and had already counted two or three times all the family portraits, and all the beams in the ceiling, when I heard a noise in the wainscot.

It was a door which the wind had blown open. I looked up, and perceived a very pretty boudoir lighted by two great casements and a glass door which opened on a magnificent park. I advanced a few steps into the apartment, and paused suddenly at a strange spectacle. A man (his back was turned to the door through which I had entered) was lying on a couch. He arose, and, without perceiving me, ran quickly to the window. Tears rolled down his cheeks and profound despair was imprinted on his features. He remained some time immovable, his head resting on his hands, then he commenced to walk with great strides across the room; turning, he saw me, stopped suddenly, and trembled. As for myself, I was horror-struck, and dazed in consequence of my indiscretion. I wished to retire, and murmured some incoherent apologies.

"Who are you? What do you want?" said he, in a deep voice, catching me by the arm.

I was very much frightened and embarrassed, but replied: "I am the Chevalier Bernard de la Roche-Bernard, and I have just arrived from Brittany."

"I know! I know!" said he, and, throwing his arms

around me, he embraced me warmly, and leading me to the couch made me sit near him, spoke to me rapidly of my father and of all my family, whom he knew so well that I concluded that it was the master of the château.

"You are Monsieur de C——, are you not?" asked I. He arose, looked at me with a strange glance, and replied: "I was, but I am no longer. I am no longer anybody." Then seeing my astonishment he said: "Not a word, young man, do not question me."

I replied, blushing: "If, Monsieur, I have witnessed, without wishing it, your chagrin and your sorrow, perhaps my devotion and my friendship can assuage your grief?"

"Yes, yes, you are right; not that you can change my condition, but you can receive, at least, my last wishes and my last vows. It is the only service that I ask of you."

He crossed the room, closed the door, then came and sat down beside me, who, agitated and trembling, awaited his words. They were somewhat grave and solemn, and his physiognomy, above all, had an expression that I had never before seen. His lofty brow, which I examined attentively, seemed marked by fate. His complexion was very pale, and his eyes were black, bright, and piercing: and from time to time his features, altered by suffering, contracted under an ironical and infernal smile.

"That which I am about to relate to you," said he, "will confound your reason; you will doubt, you will not believe me, perhaps; even I often doubt still. I

tell myself it can not be; but the proofs are too real; and are there not in all that surrounds us, in our organization even, many other mysteries that we are obliged to submit to, without being able to comprehend?" He paused a moment, as if to gather together his thoughts, passed his hand over his brow, and continued: "I was born in this château. I had two elder brothers, to whom fell the wealth and honors of our house. I had nothing to expect, nothing to look forward to but an abbé's mantle; nevertheless, ambitious dreams of glory and power fermented in my head and made my heart throb with anticipation. Miserable in my obscurity, eager for renown, I thought only of means to acquire it at any price, and these ideas made me insensible to all the pleasures and all the sweetness of life. To me the present was nothing; I only existed for the future, and this future presented itself to me under a most sombre aspect. I reached my thirtieth year without having accomplished anything;—then there arose in the capital literary lights whose brilliance penetrated even to our remote province. Ah! thought I, if I could at least make for myself a name in the world of letters, that might bring renown, and therein lies true happiness. I had for a confidant of my chagrins an old servant, an aged negro, who had served in my family many years before my birth; he was the oldest person on the estate, or for miles around, for no one could recall his first appearance, and the country folk said that he had known the Maréchal Fabert, was present at his death, and that he was an evil spirit."

At that name, I started with surprise; the unknown paused and asked me the cause of my embarrassment.

"Nothing," said I; but I could not help thinking that the black man must be the one spoken of by the old landlord of the "Armes de France" the previous evening.

M. de C—— continued:

"One day in Yago's presence (that was the old negro's name) I gave way to my feelings, bemoaned my obscurity, and bewailed my useless and monotonous life, and I cried aloud in my despair: 'I would willingly give ten years of my life to be placed in the first rank of our authors!'

" 'Ten years,' said Yago, coolly; 'that is much, it is paying very dear for so little a thing; no matter, I accept your ten years; remember your promise, I will surely keep mine.'

"I can not describe to you my great surprise on hearing him speak thus. I believed that his mind had become enfeebled by the weight of years. I shrugged my shoulders and smiled, and took no further notice of him. Some days afterward I left home for Paris. There I found myself launched into the society of men of letters; their example encouraged and stimulated me, and I soon published several works that were very successful, which I will not now describe. All Paris rushed to see me, the journals were filled with my praises. The new name I had taken became celebrated, and even recently, young man, you have admired my works."

Here another gesture of surprise on my part inter-

rupted this recital. "Then you are not the Duc de C——?" cried I.

"No," replied he, coldly. And I asked myself: "A celebrated man of letters! Is this Marmontel? is it D'Alembert? is it Voltaire?"

The unknown sighed, a smile of regret and contempt spread over his lips, and he continued his recital.

"This literary reputation, which had seemed to me so desirable, soon failed to satisfy a soul so ardent as mine. I aspired to still higher successes, and I said to Yago (who had followed me to Paris and who kept close watch over me): 'This is not real glory, there is no veritable renown but that which one acquires in the career of arms. What is an author, a poet? Nothing! Give me a great general, or a captain in the army! Behold the destiny that I desire, and for a great military reputation I would willingly give ten more years of my life.'

"'I accept them,' replied Yago, quickly. 'I take them—they belong to me—do not forget it.'"

At this stage of his recital the unknown paused once more on seeing the alarm and incredulity that were depicted on my features.

"You remember, I warned you, young man," said he, "that you could not believe my story. It must seem to you a dream, a chimera—to me also;—nevertheless the promotions, the honors that I soon obtained, were no illusions. Those brave soldiers that I led into the thickest of the fight! Those brilliant charges! Those captured flags! Those victories which all

France heard of; all that was *my* work—all that glory belonged to me!"

While he marched up and down the room with great strides, and spoke thus with warmth and with enthusiasm, astonishment and fear had almost paralyzed my senses. "Who then is this person?" thought I. "Is it Coligny? is it Richelieu? is it the Maréchal de Saxe?"

From his state of exaltation my unknown had fallen again into deepest dejection, and, approaching me, said with a sombre air: "Yago kept his promise; and when, later on, disgusted with the vain smoke of military glory, I aspired to that which is only real and positive in this world—when at the price of five or six years of existence I desired great riches, he gladly gave them to me. Yes, young man, I have possessed vast wealth, far beyond my wildest dreams—estates, forests, and châteaux. To-day, still, all this is mine, and in my power; if you doubt me—if you doubt the existence of Yago—wait here, he is coming, and you can see for yourself that which would confound your reason and mine were it not unfortunately too real."

The unknown approached the fireplace, looked at the timepiece, made a gesture of alarm, and said to me in a deep voice:

"This morning at daybreak I felt myself so weak and so feeble that I could scarcely rise. I rang for my *valet-de-chambre;* it was Yago who appeared. 'What is this strange feeling?' asked I.

" 'Master, nothing but what is perfectly natural. The hour approaches, the moment arrives.'

"'And what is it?' cried I.

"'Can you not divine it? Heaven has destined you sixty years to live; you were thirty when I began to obey you.'

"'Yago!' cried I in affright, 'do you speak seriously?'

"'Yes, master; in five years you have spent in glory twenty-five years of life. You have sold them to me. They belong to me; and these years that you have voluntarily given up are now added to mine.'

"'What! That, then, was the price of your services?'

"'Yes, and many others—for ages past—have paid more dearly; for instance, Fabert, whom I protected also.'

"'Be silent, be silent!' cried I; 'this is not possible; it can not be true!'

"'As you please; but prepare yourself; for there only remains for you a brief half-hour of life.'

"'You are mocking me!'

"'Not at all. Calculate for yourself. Thirty-five years you have had, and twenty-five years you have sold to me—total, sixty. It is your own count; each one takes his own.' Then he wished to go away, and I felt my strength diminish. I felt my life leaving me.

"'Yago! Yago!' I cried feebly; 'give me a few hours, a few hours more!'

"'No, no,' replied he, 'it would be taking away from myself, and I know better than you the value of life. There is no treasure worth two hours of existence.'

"I could scarcely speak; my eyes were set in my head, and the chill of death congealed the blood in my veins. 'Very well!' said I with an effort, 'take back your gifts, for that which I have sacrificed all. Four hours more and I renounce my gold, my wealth—all this opulence that I have so much desired.'

" 'Be it so; you have been a good master, and I am willing to do something for you. I consent.'

"I felt my strength come back, and I cried: 'Four hours—that is very little! Yago! Yago! Four hours more and I renounce all my literary fame, all my works that have placed me so high in the world's esteem.'

" 'Four hours for that!' cried the negro with disdain; 'it is too much. No matter. I can not refuse your last request.'

" 'Not the last!' cried I, clasping my hands before him. 'Yago! Yago! I supplicate you, give me until this evening. The twelve hours, the entire day, and all my exploits, my victories, all my military renown may all be effaced from the memory of men. This day, Yago, dear Yago; this whole day, and I will be content!'

" 'You abuse my kindness,' said he; 'no matter, I will give you until sunset; after that you must not ask me. This evening, then, I will come for you'—and he is gone," continued the unknown, in despairing accents —"and this day, in which I see you for the first time, is my last on earth." Then going to the glass door, which was open, and which led to the park, he cried: "Alas! I will no longer behold the beautiful sky,

these green lawns, the sparkling fountains! I will never again breathe the balmy air of springtime. Fool that I have been! These gifts that God has given to all of us; these blessings, to which I was insensible, and of which I can only now, when it is too late, appreciate and comprehend the sweetness—and I might have enjoyed them for twenty-five years more!—and I have used up my life! I have sacrificed it for what? For a vain and sterile glory, which has not made me happy, and which dies with me! Look!" said he to me, pointing to some peasants who traversed the park, singing on their way to work. "What would I not give now to share their labors and their poverty! But I have no longer anything to give, or to hope for here below, not even misfortune!"

Just then a ray of sunlight (the sun of the month of May) shone through the casement and lit up his pale and distracted features. He seized my arm in a sort of delirium, and said to me: "See! see there! is it not beautiful? the sun!—and I must leave all this! Ah! at least I am still alive! I will have this whole day—so pure, so bright, so radiant—this day which for me has no morrow!" he then ran down the steps of the open door, and bounded like a deer across the park, and at a detour of the path he disappeared in the shrubbery, before I hardly realized that he was gone, or could detain him. To tell the truth, I would not have had the strength. I lay back on the couch, stunned, dazed, and weak with the shock of all I had heard. I arose and walked up and down the room, to assure myself that I was awake, that I had not been

under the influence of a dream. Just then the door of the boudoir opened and a servant announced: "Here is my master, the Duc de C——."

A man of sixty years and of distinguished presence advanced toward me, and, giving me his hand, apologized for having made me wait so long.

"I was not in the château. I had gone to seek my younger brother, the Comte de C——, who is ill."

"And is he in danger?" interrupted I.

"No, monsieur. Thanks to heaven," replied my host; "but in his youth ambitious dreams of glory exalted his imagination, and a serious illness that he has had recently (and which he deemed fatal) has upset his mind, and produced a sort of delirium and mental aberration, by which he persuades himself always that he has but one day to live. It is insanity."

All was explained to me.

"Now," continued the duke, "let us come to you, young man, and see what can be done for your advancement. We will depart at the end of the month for Versailles. I will present you at court."

I blushed and replied: "I appreciate your kindness, Monsieur le Duc, and I thank you very much; but I will not go to Versailles."

"What! would you renounce the court and all the advantages and promotions which certainly await you there?"

"Yes, Monsieur—"

"But do you realize that with my influence you can rise rapidly, and that with a little assiduity and patience you can become distinguished in ten years?"

"Ten years lost!" I cried in terror.

"What!" replied he, astonished. "Ten years is not much to pay for fortune, glory, and honors? Come, come, my young friend. Come with me to Versailles."

"No, Monsieur le Duc. I am determined to return to Brittany, and I beg of you to receive my profound gratitude, and that of my family."

"What folly!" cried he.

And I, remembering what I had listened to, said: "It is wisdom!"

The next day I was en route, and with what exquisite delight did I behold my beautiful château of Roche-Bernard, the grand old trees in my park, and the bright sunshine of Brittany. I found again my vassals, my mother, my sisters, my fiancée, and my happiness, which I still retain, for one week later I married Henriette.

NAPOLEON AND POPE PIUS VII

BY ALFRED VICTOR, COMTE DE VIGNY

In 1835, "in one of the most distinguished books of modern literature," as Edmund Gosse says, De Vigny exemplified the illusion of military glory in three episodes. The story here given is the great scene in the third episode which mocks the illusion of active glory.

Alfred de Vigny was born at Loches in 1799. In 1828 he resigned his commission in the army, where he had been fighting and writing since 1815, having already published his masterly poem "Möise," and the historical novel "Cinq-Mars," after the manner of Walter Scott. His one dramatic success was "Chatterton." His last days were passed in solitude, and he died at Paris in 1863.

De Vigny rings the changes on the stupidity of men, the impassibility of nature, the silence of God; so careful and laborious a writer that he has produced only some forty works, a few of these of the very flower of French literature. De Vigny is an idealist, but, as it has lately been discovered, whenever he says "I" his statements are true.

NAPOLEON AND POPE PIUS VII

BY ALFRED DE VIGNY

WE were at Fontainebleau. The Pope had just arrived. The Emperor had awaited him with great impatience, as he desired the Holy Father to crown him. Napoleon received him in person, and they immediately entered the carriage—on opposite sides, at the same time, apparently with an entire neglect of etiquette, but this was only in appearance, for the movement was thoroughly calculated. It was so arranged that neither might seem to yield precedence or to exact it from the other. The ruse was characteristically Italian. They at once drove toward the palace, where all kinds of rumors were in circulation. I had left several officers in the room which preceded that of the Emperor; and I was quite alone in his apartment.

I was standing looking at a long table, which was of Roman mosaic work, and which was absolutely loaded, covered with heaps of papers. I had often seen Napoleon enter, and submit the pile of documents to a strange system of decision. He did not take the letters either by hazard or in order; but when the number irritated him, he swept them off the table with his hand—striking right and left like a mower, until he had reduced the number to six or seven, which he

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opened. Such disdainful conduct had moved me singularly. So many letters of distress and mourning cast underfoot as if by an angry wind; so many useless prayers of widows and orphans having no chance except that of being spared by the consular hand; so many groaning leaves, moistened by the tears of so many families, trampled under his heel with as little compunction as if they were corpses on a battlefield—all these seemed to represent the fate of France. Although the hand that acted so ruthlessly was strong, it seemed always that such brutal strength was anything but admirable, and it seemed wrong that so much should be left to the caprice of such a man. Moreover, had a little consideration been shown, Napoleon would have had so many more buttresses for his power and authority. I felt my heart rise against the man—but feebly, like the heart of one who was his slave. I thought of the letters which had been treated with such cruel contempt; cries of anguish came from the envelopes; and having read some of the petitions I constituted myself judge between the man and those who had sacrificed themselves so much for him, upon whose necks he was going to fasten the yoke tighter that very day. I was holding one of the papers in my hand, when the beating of the drums informed me of the arrival of Napoleon. Now you know that just as one always sees the flash from a cannon before one hears the report, one always saw him as he was heard to be approaching; he was so active, and seemed to have so little time. When he rode into the courtyard of the palace, his attendants were scarcely able to keep

up with him. The sentry had barely time to salute before the Emperor had got down from his horse and was hurrying up the staircase. This time he had left the Pope in the carriage in order to be able to enter the palace alone, and had galloped on ahead. I heard the sound of his spurs at the same time as the drums. I had only just time enough to throw myself into an alcove where there was an old-fashioned high bedstead which was used by no one, and which was, fortunately, concealed by curtains.

The Emperor was in a state of great excitement, and strode about the room as if waiting for some one with great impatience. Having darted across the room several times, he went to the window and began to drum on the panes. A carriage rolled into the court; he ceased beating a tattoo on the glass, and stamped with his foot as if the sight which he saw in the courtyard was anything but agreeable to him. Then he tore across the room to the door, which he opened for the Pope.

Pius VII entered unattended. Bonaparte hastily closed the door after the old man with the care of a jailer. I will confess that I was in a state of mortal terror at being the third of the party. However, I remained motionless, listening eagerly to every word that was said.

The Pope was tall; his face was long, yellow, and had traces of great suffering, but bore the imprint of a goodness of soul and nobility of spirit which knew no bounds. He had fine, big, black eyes, and his mouth was sweetened by a smile which lent something spiri-

tuelle and vivacious to his countenance. It was a smile in which one could detect nothing of the cunning of the world, but which was full to overflowing of Christian goodness. On his head he wore a skull cap, from under which escaped locks of his silver-streaked hair. A red velvet cloak hung negligently on his stooping shoulders, and his robe dragged at his feet. He entered slowly, with the calm and prudent step of an aged man, sank down into one of the big Roman armchairs, which were gilded and covered with eagles, lowered his eyes, and waited to hear what the other Italian had to say to him.

What a scene that was! I can see it still. It was not the genius of the man which I noticed, but his character. Bonaparte was not then as you knew him afterward; he had not grown gross—he had not the swollen face, the gouty legs, nor was he so ridiculously stout as he afterward became. Unfortunately, in art he is almost always represented by a sort of caricature, so that he will not be handed down to posterity as he really was. He was not ungainly then, but nervous and supple, lithe and active, convulsive in some of his gestures, in some gracious; his chest was flat and narrow—in short, he looked just as I had seen him at Malta.

He did not stop stalking round the room when the Pope entered. He wandered round the chair of the latter like a cautious hunter; then suddenly halting in front of Pius, he resumed a conversation which had been commenced in the carriage, and which he was evidently anxious to continue.

"I tell you again, Holy Father, I am not a free-thinker; and I don't agree with those who are forever reasoning about religious matters. I assure you that in spite of my old republicans I shall go to mass."

The last words he threw bruskly, as it were, in the Pope's face—incense of flattery undisguised. Then he suddenly stopped and examined the Pope's countenance to catch the result, which he seemed to expect to be great. The old man lowered his eyes and rested his hands on the heads of the eagles which formed the arms of the chair. He seemed to have assumed the attitude of a Roman statue purposely, as if wishing to express: I resign myself to hearing all the profane things that he may choose to say to me!

Bonaparte took a turn round the room, and round the chair which was in the middle, and it was plain to be seen that he was not satisfied either with himself or with his adversary, and that he was reproaching himself for having resumed the conversation so rashly. So he began to talk more connectedly as he walked round the room, all the time watching narrowly the reflection of the pontiff's face in the mirror, and also eying him carefully in profile as he passed; but not venturing to look him full in the face for fear of appearing too anxious about the effect of his words.

"There is one thing that hurts me very much, Holy Father," said he, "and that is that you consent to the coronation as you formerly consented to the Concordat —as if you were compelled to do so, and not as of free will. You sit there before me with the air of a martyr, resigned to the will of heaven, and suffering

for the sake of your conscience. But that is not the fact. You are not a prisoner. You are as free as the air."

Pius VII smiled and looked his interlocutor in the face. He realized that the despotic nature with which he had to contend was not satisfied with obedience unless one seemed willing, even anxious, to obey.

"Yes," continued Bonaparte, "you are quite free. You may return to Rome if you like. The road is open and no one will stop you."

Without uttering a word, the Pope sighed and raised his hand and his eyes to heaven; then very slowly he lowered his eyes and studied the cross on his bosom attentively.

Bonaparte continued to walk round the room and to talk to his captive, his voice becoming sweeter and more wheedling.

"Holy Father, were it not for the reverence I have for you I should be inclined to say that you are a little ungrateful. You seem to ignore entirely the services which France has rendered you. As far as I am able to judge, the Council of Venice, which elected you Pope, was influenced somewhat by my campaign in Italy, as well as by a word which I spoke for you. I was very much troubled at the time that Austria treated you so badly. I believe that your Holiness was obliged to return to Rome by sea for fear of passing through Austrian territory."

He stopped for the answer of his silent guest; Pius VII made simply the slightest inclination of the head,

and remained plunged in a melancholy reverie which seemed to prevent him from hearing Napoleon.

Bonaparte then pushed a chair near to that of the Pope. I started, for in seeking the chair he had come very near my hiding-place, he even brushed the curtains which concealed me.

"It was as a Catholic really that I was so afflicted about your vexations. I have never had much time to study theology, it is true, but I maintain a great faith in the Church. She has a wonderful vitality, Holy Father, although Voltaire did you some little harm, certainly. Now if you are only willing we can do a great deal of work together in the future."

He assumed a caressing, wheedling air of innocence.

"Really, I have tried to understand your motives, but I can't for the life of me see what objection you can have to making Paris your seat. I'll leave the Tuileries to you if you like. You'll find your room waiting for you there. I scarcely ever go there myself. Don't you see, Father, it is the capital of the world. I'll do whatever you want me to; and really, after all, I am not as bad as I am painted. If you'll leave war and politics to me you may do as you like in ecclesiastical matters. In fact, I would be your soldier. Now wouldn't that be a grand arrangement? We could hold our councils like Constantine and Charlemagne—I would open and dissolve them; and then I would put the keys of the world into your hands, for as our Lord said: 'I came with a sword,' and I would keep the sword; I would only bring it

to you for your blessing after each new success of our arms."

The Pope, who until then had remained as motionless as an Egyptian statue, slowly raised his head, smiled sadly, lifted his eyes to heaven, and said, after a gentle sigh, as if he were confiding the thought to his invisible guardian angel:

"Commediante!"

Napoleon leaped from his chair like a wounded tiger. He was in one of his "yellow tempers." At first he stamped about without uttering a word, biting his lips till the blood came. He no longer circled round his prey cautiously, but walked from end to end of the room with firm resounding steps, and clinking his spurs noisily. The room shook; the curtains trembled like trees at the approach of a storm; I thought that something terrible would surely happen; my hair began to bristle, and I put my hand to my head unwittingly. I looked at the Pope. He did not stir, but simply pressed the heads of the eagles with his hands.

The storm burst violently.

"Comedian! What? I, a comedian? Indeed, I'll play some comedies for you that will set you all a-weeping like women and children! Comedian, forsooth! You are mistaken if you think that you may insult me with impunity. My theatre is the world; the rôle that I play is the double one of master and actor; I use all of you as comedians, popes, kings, peoples, and the string by which I work you—*you* my puppets—is fear. You would need to be a much heavier man than you are, Signor Chiaramonti, to dare

to applaud or hiss me. Do you know that if it be my will you will become a simple *curé?* As for you and your tiara, France would mock at you if I did not seem to be serious in saluting you.

"Only four years ago nobody dared speak of Christ. Had that state of things continued who would have cared for the Pope, I should like to know? Comedian! You gentlemen are a little too ready at getting a foothold among us. And now you are dissatisfied because I am not such a fool as to sign away the liberties of France as did Louis XIV. But you had better not sing to me in that tune. It is I who hold you between my thumb and finger; it is I who can carry you from north to south and then back again to the north like so many marionettes; it is I who give you some stability because you represent an old idea which I wish to resuscitate; and you have not enough wit to see that, and to act as if you were not aware of the fact. Now I'll speak to you frankly. Trouble your head with your own affairs and don't interfere in what you don't understand and with what doesn't in the least concern you. You seem to think that you are necessary, you set yourselves up as if you were of some weight, and you dress yourselves in women's clothes. But I'll let you know that you don't impose on me with all that; and if you don't change your tactics very soon I'll treat your robes as Charles XII did that of the Grand Vizier—I'll tear them with my spur."

Then he ceased. I scarcely dared breathe. I advanced my head a little, not hearing his voice, to see

if the poor old priest was dead with fright. The same absolutely calm attitude, the same calm expression on his face. For the second time he raised his eyes to heaven, again he sighed, and smiled bitterly as he murmured:

"Tragediante!"

Bonaparte was at the farther end of the room, leaning against a marble chimney which was as high as he was tall. Like an arrow shot out of a bow, he rushed straight at the old man; I thought he was going to kill him as he sat. But he suddenly stopped short, seized a Sèvres vase on which the Capitol was painted, threw it on the hearth and ground it under his heels. Then he remained terribly quiet.

I was relieved, for I felt that his reason had got the better of his temper. He became sad, and when he finally spoke in a deep voice, it was evident that in the two words uttered by the Pope he had recognized his true portrait.

"Miserable life!" he said. Then he fell into reverie, and without speaking tore the brim of his hat. When his voice again was heard he was talking to himself:

"It's true. Tragedian or comedian, I am always playing a part—all is costume and pose. How wearying it all is, and how belittling! Pose! pose! always pose! In one case full face, in another profile—but invariably for effect. Always trying to appear what others worship, so that I may deceive the fools, keeping them between hope and fear. Dazzling them by bulletins, by prestige. Master of all of them and not knowing what to do with them. That's the simple

truth after all. And to make myself so miserable through it all! It really is too much. For," continued he, sitting down in an armchair and crossing his legs, "it bores me to death, the whole farce. As soon as I sit down I don't know what to do with myself. I can't even hunt for three days in succession at Fontainebleau with being weary of it. I must always be moving and making others move. I speak quite frankly. I have plans in my life which would require the lives of forty emperors to carry out, and I make new ones every morning and evening; my imagination is always on the *qui vive;* but before I have carried out two of them I shall be exhausted in body and mind; for our poor lamp of life doesn't burn long enough. And I must confess that if I could carry them out I should not find that the world was one whit better than it is now; but it *would* be better though, for it would be united. I am not a philosopher. I don't understand many theories. Life is too short to stop. As soon as I have an idea I put it into execution. Others will find reasons after me for praising me if I succeed and for abusing me if I fail. Differences of opinion are active—they abound in France—but I keep them down while I am alive—afterward—Well, no matter! It is my business to succeed, and that I intend to do. Every day I make an Iliad by my actions—every day."

Thereupon he rose quickly. In that moment he was lively and natural, and was not thinking of posing as he afterward did in St. Helena; he did not strive to make himself ideal or to pose for effect—he was him-

self outside of himself. He went back to the Pope, who had remained seated, and paced in front of him. Getting warmed up, he spoke with a dash of irony, at an incredible rate:

"Birth is everything. Those who come into the world poor and neglected are always desperate. That desperation turns to action or suicide according to character. When they have courage to attempt something as I have done, they raise the devil. But what else is to be done? One must live. One must find one's place and make one's mark. I have carried everything before me like a cannon-ball—all the worse for those who happened to be in my way. But what else could I have done? Each man eats according to his appetite, and I have an insatiable one. Do you know, Holy Father, at Toulon I had not wherewithal to buy myself a pair of epaulets, in place of which I had a mother and I don't know how many brothers on my shoulders. They are all satisfactorily settled at present. Josephine married me out of pity in spite of her old notary, who objected that I owned nothing but my cap and cape, and now we are going to crown her. The old man was right, though, as to what I possessed at that time. Imperial mantle! Crown! what does all that mean? Is it mine? Costume! Actor's costume! I will put them on for an hour and then I shall have had enough of them. Then I shall don my officer's uniform, and 'To horse'; all my life on horseback. I couldn't pass a single day resting, without being in danger of falling out of the chair. I am to be envied? Eh?

"I repeat, Holy Father; there are only two classes of men in the world: those who have and those who gain.

"Those who are in the first class rest, the others are restless. As I learnt that lesson at an early age and to some purpose I shall go a long way. There are only two men who have done anything before they were forty years old; Cromwell and Jean-Jacques; if you had given one a farm, and the other twelve hundred francs and his servant, they would neither have commanded nor preached nor written. There are workmen in buildings, in colors, in forms, and in phrases; I am a workman in battles. It's my business. At the age of thirty-five I have manufactured eighteen of them, which are called 'Victories.' I must be paid for my work. And a throne is certainly not extravagant payment. Besides, I shall always go on working. You will see that all dynasties will date from mine, although I am a mere parvenu. I am elected as you are, Holy Father—and drawn from the multitude. On this point we can well shake hands."

And, approaching the Pope, Napoleon held out his hand. Pius took the hand which was offered to him, but shook his head sadly, and I saw his fine eyes cloud with tears.

Bonaparte cast a hurried glance at the tears which he had wrung from the old Pope, and I surprised even a rapid motion in the corners of his mouth much resembling a smile of triumph. At that moment his intensely powerful and overbearing nature seemed to me less admirable than that of his saintly adversary;

I blushed for all my past admiration of Napoleon; I felt a sadness creep over me at the thought that the grandest policy appears little when stained by tricks of vanity. I saw that the emperor had gained his end in the interview by having yielded nothing and by having drawn a sign of weakness from the Pope. He had wished to have the last word, and without uttering another syllable, he left the room as abruptly as he had entered. I could not see whether he saluted the Pope or not, but I do not think he did.

CLAUDE GUEUX

BY VICTOR MARIE HUGO

Victor Hugo, greatest and most versatile of the French poets of the nineteenth century, was born at Besançon in 1802. He published a succession of monumental romances, plays, poems, until he was elected in 1844 to the Academy. After that he threw himself into the political turmoil of the period, becoming chief of the opponents of Louis Bonaparte and of the reconstruction of the Empire, and was exiled for eighteen years to Jersey and Guernsey, where he wrote, in 1862, "Les Misérables."

All contemporary poetry has been said to take its inspiration from Victor Hugo. Besides a wonderfully fertile and monumental mind, dignified, dramatic, satiric, he had a special genius for expressing by the sound of a phrase what could not be directly expressed in words.

"Claude Gueux," which means ragamuffin and simpleton, written about 1828, is an indignant pleading in favor of the numerous classes of outcasts who would be useful citizens if not led to crime by misery.

CLAUDE GUEUX

BY VICTOR HUGO

CLAUDE GUEUX was a poor workman, living in Paris about eight years ago, with his mistress and child. Although his education had been neglected, and he could not even read, the man was naturally clever and intelligent, and thought deeply over matters. Winter came with its attendant miseries—want of work, want of food, want of fuel. The man, the woman, and the child were frozen and famished. The man turned thief. I know not what he stole. What signifies, as the result was the same? To the woman and child it gave three days' bread and warmth; to the man, five years' imprisonment. He was taken to Clairvaux—the abbey now converted into a prison, its cells into dungeons, and the altar itself into a pillory. This is called progress.

Claude Gueux, the honest workman, who turned thief from force of circumstances, had a countenance which impressed you—a high forehead somewhat lined with care, dark hair already streaked with gray, deep-set eyes beaming with kindness, while the lower part clearly indicated firmness mingled with self-respect. He rarely spoke, yet there was a certain dignity in the man which commanded respect and obedience. A fine character, and we shall see what society made of it.

Over the prison workshop was an inspector, who rarely forgot that he was the jailer also to his subordinates, handing them the tools with one hand, and casting chains upon them with the other. A tyrant, never using even self-reasoning; with ideas against which there was no appeal; hard rather than firm, at times he could even be jocular—doubtless a good father, a good husband, really not vicious, but *bad.* He was one of those men who never can grasp a fresh idea, who apparently fail to be moved by any emotion; yet with hatred and rage in their hearts look like blocks of wood, heated on the one side but frozen on the other. This man's chief characteristic was obstinacy; and so proud was he of this very stubbornness that he compared himself with Napoleon—an optical delusion, like taking the mere flicker of a candle for a star. When he had made up his mind to a thing, however absurd, he would carry out that absurd idea. How often it happens, that, when a catastrophe occurs, if we inquire into the cause we find it originated through the obstinacy of one with little ability, but having full faith in his own powers.

Such was the inspector of the prison workshop at Clairvaux—a man of flint placed by society over others, who hoped to strike sparks out of such material; but a spark from a like source is apt to end in a conflagration.

The inspector soon singled out Claude Gueux, who had been numbered and placed in the workshop, and, finding him clever, treated him well. Seeing Claude

looking sad (for he was ever thinking of her he termed his wife), and being in a good humor, by way of pastime to console the prisoner he told him the woman had become one of the unfortunate sisterhood, and had been reduced to infamy; of the child nothing was known.

After a time Claude had accustomed himself to prison rule, and by his calmness of manner and a certain amount of resolution clearly marked in his face, he had acquired a great ascendency over his companions, who so much admired him that they asked his advice, and tried in all ways to imitate him. The very expression in his eyes clearly indicated the man's character; besides, is not the eye the window of the soul, and what other result could be anticipated than that the intelligent spirit should lead men with few ideas, who yield to the attraction as the metal does to the lodestone? In less than three months Claude was the virtual head of the workshop, and at times he almost doubted whether he was king or prisoner, being treated something like a captive pope, surrounded by his cardinals.

Such popularity ever has its attendant hatred; and though beloved by the prisoners, Claude was detested by the jailers. To him two men's rations would have been scarcely sufficient. The inspector laughed at this, as his own appetite was large; but what would be mirth to a duke, to a prisoner would be a great misfortune. When a free man, Claude Gueux could earn his daily four-pound loaf and enjoy it; but as a prisoner he daily worked, and for his labor received

one pound and a half of bread and four ounces of meat: it naturally followed that he was always hungry.

He had just finished his meagre fare, and was about to resume his labors, hoping in work to forget famine, when a weakly looking young man came toward him, holding a knife and his untasted rations in his hand, but seemingly afraid to address him.

"What do you want?" said Claude, roughly.

"A favor at your hands," timidly replied the young man.

"What is it?" said Claude.

"Help me with my rations; I have more than I can eat."

For a moment Claude was taken aback, but without further ceremony he divided the food in two and at once partook of one-half.

"Thank you," said the young man; "allow me to share my rations with you every day."

"What is your name?" said Claude.

"Albin."

"Why are you here?" added Claude.

"I robbed."

"So did I," said Claude.

The same scene took place daily between this man old before his time (he was only thirty-six) and the boy of twenty, who looked at the most seventeen. The feeling was more like that of father and son than one brother to another; everything created a bond of union between them—the very toil they endured together, the fact of sleeping in the same quarters and taking exercise in the same courtyard. They were

happy, for were they not all the world to each other? The inspector of the workshop was so hated by the prisoners that he often had recourse to Claude Gueux to enforce his authority; and when a tumult was on the point of breaking out, a few words from Claude had more effect than the authority of ten wardens. Although the inspector was glad to avail himself of this influence, he was jealous all the same, and hated the superior prisoner with an envious and implacable feeling—an example of might over right, all the more fearful as it was secretly nourished. But Claude cared so much for Albin that he thought little about the inspector.

One morning as the warders were going their rounds one of them summoned Albin, who was working with Claude, to go before the inspector.

"What are you wanted for?" said Claude.

"I do not know," replied Albin, following the warder.

All day Claude looked in vain for his companion, and at night, finding him still absent, he broke through his ordinary reserve and addressed the turnkey. "Is Albin ill?" said he.

"No," replied the man.

"How is it that he has never put in an appearance to-day?"

"His quarters have been changed," was the reply.

For a moment Claude trembled, then calmly continued, "Who gave the order?"

"Monsieur D——." This was the inspector's name.

On the following night the inspector, Monsieur

D——, went his rounds as usual. Claude, who had perceived him from the distance, rose, and hastened to raise his woolen cap and button his gray woolen vest to the throat—considered a mark of respect to superiors in prison discipline.

"Sir," said Claude, as the inspector was about to pass him, "has Albin really been quartered elsewhere?"

"Yes," replied the inspector.

"Sir, I can not live without him. You know the rations are insufficient for me, and Albin divided his portion with me. Could you not manage to let him resume his old place near me?"

"Impossible; the order can not be revoked."

"By whom was it given?"

"By me."

"Monsieur D——," replied Claude, "on you my life depends."

"I never cancel an order once given."

"Sir, what have I ever done to you?"

"Nothing."

"Why, then," cried Claude, "separate me from Albin?"

"Because I do," replied the inspector, and with that he passed on.

Claude's head sank down, like the poor caged lion deprived of his dog; but the grief, though so deeply felt, in no way changed his appetite—he was famished. Many offered to share their rations with him, but he steadily refused, and continued his usual routine in silence—breaking it only to ask the inspector daily, in tones of anguish mingled with rage, something be-

tween a prayer and a threat, these two words: "And Albin?"

The inspector simply passed on, shrugging his shoulders; but had he only observed Claude he would have seen the evident change, noticeable to all present, and he would have heard these words, spoken respectfully but firmly:

"Sir, listen to me; send my companion to me. It would be wise to do so, I can assure you. Remember my words!"

On Sunday he had sat for hours in the courtyard, with his head bowed in his hands, and when a prisoner called Faillette came up laughing, Claude said: I am judging some one."

On the 25th of October, 1831, as the inspector went his rounds, Claude, to draw his attention, smashed a watch-glass he had found in the passage. This had the desired effect.

"It was I," said Claude. "Sir, restore my comrade to me."

"Impossible," was the answer.

Looking the inspector full in the face, Claude firmly added: "Now, reflect! To-day is the 25th of October; I give you till the 4th of November."

A warder remarked that Claude was threatening Monsieur D——, and ought at once to be locked up.

"No, it is not a case of blackhole," replied the inspector smiling disdainfully; "we must be considerate with people of this stamp."

The following day Claude was again accosted by

one of the prisoners named Pernot, as he was brooding in the courtyard.

"Well, Claude, you are sad indeed; what are you pondering over?"

"I fear some evil threatens that good Monsieur D——," answered Claude.

Claude daily impressed the fact on the inspector how much Albin's absence affected him, but with no result save four-and-twenty hours' solitary confinement.

On the 4th of November he looked round his cell for the little that remained to remind him of his former life. A pair of scissors, and an old volume of the "Emile," belonging to the woman he had loved so well, the mother of his child—how useless to a man who could neither work nor read!

As Claude walked down the old cloisters, so dishonored by its new inmates and its fresh whitewashed walls, he noticed how earnestly the convict Ferrari was looking at the heavy iron bars that crossed the window, and he said to him: "To-night I will cut through these bars with these scissors, pointing to the pair he still held in his hand.

Ferrari laughed incredulously, and Claude joined in the mirth. During the day he worked with more than ordinary ardor, wishing to finish a straw hat, which he had been paid for in advance by a tradesman at Troyes—M. Bressier.

Shortly before noon he made some excuse to go down into the carpenters' quarters, a story below his own, at the time the warders were absent. Claude

received a hearty welcome, as he was equally popular here as elsewhere.

"Can any one lend me an ax?" he said.

"What for?"

Without exacting any promises of secrecy he at once replied: "To kill the inspector with to-night."

Claude was at once offered several; choosing the smallest, he hid it beneath his waistcoat and left. Now, there were twenty-seven prisoners present, and not one of those men betrayed him; they even refrained from talking upon the subject among themselves, waiting for the terrible event which must follow.

As Claude passed on, seeing a young convict of sixteen yawning idly there, he strongly advised him to learn how to read. Just then Faillette asked what he was hiding.

Claude answered unhesitatingly: "An ax to kill Monsieur D—— to-night; but can you see it?"

"A little," said Faillette.

At seven o'clock the prisoners were locked in their several workshops. It was then the custom for the warders to leave them, until the inspector had been his rounds.

In Claude's workshop a most extraordinary scene took place, the only one of the kind on record. Claude rose and addressed his companions, eighty-four in number, in the following words:

"You all know Albin and I were like brothers. I liked him at first for sharing his rations with me, afterward because he cared for me. Now I never have

sufficient, though I spend the pittance I earn in bread. It could make no possible difference to the inspector, Monsieur D——, that we should be together; but he chose to separate us simply from a love of tormenting, for he is a bad man. I asked again and again for Albin to be sent back, without success; and when I gave him a stated time, the 4th of November, I was thrust into a dungeon. During that time I became his judge, and sentenced him to death on November the 4th. In two hours he will be here, and I warn you I intend to kill him. But have you anything to say?"

There was a dead silence. Claude then continued telling his comrades, the eighty-one thieves, his ideas on the subject—that he was reduced to a fearful extremity, and compelled by that very necessity to take the law into his own hands; that he knew full well he could not take the inspector's life without sacrificing his own, but that as the cause was a just one he would bear the consequences, having come to this conclusion after two months' calm reflection; that if they considered resentment alone hurried him on to such a step they were at once to say so, and to state their objections to the sentence being carried out.

One voice alone broke the silence which followed, saying, "Before killing the inspector, Claude ought to give him a chance of relenting."

"That is but just," said Claude, "and he shall have the benefit of the doubt."

Claude then sorted the few things a poor prisoner is allowed, and gave them to the comrades he mostly

cared for after Albin, keeping only the pair of scissors. He then embraced them all—some not being able to withhold their tears at such a moment. Claude continued calmly to converse during this last hour, and even gave way to a trick he had as a boy, of extinguishing the candle with a breath from his nose. Seeing him thus, his companions afterward owned that they hoped he had abandoned his sinister idea. One young convict looked at him fixedly, trembling for the coming event.

"Take courage, young fellow," said Claude, gently; "it will be but the work of a minute."

The workshop was a long room with a door at both ends, and with windows each side overlooking the benches, thus leaving a pathway up the centre for the inspector to review the work on both sides of him. Claude had now resumed his work—something like Jacques Clement, who did not fail to repeat his prayers.

As the clock sounded the last quarter to nine, Claude rose and placed himself near the entrance, apparently calm. Amid the most profound silence the clock struck nine; the door was thrown open, and the inspector came in as usual alone, looking quite jovial and self-satisfied, passing rapidly along, tossing his head at one; grinding words out to another, little heeding the eyes fixed so fiercely upon him. Just then he heard Claude's step, and turning quickly around said:

"What are you doing here? Why are you not in your place?" just as he would have spoken to a dog.

Claude answered respectfully, "I wish to speak to you, sir."

"On what subject?"

"Albin."

"Again!"

"Always the same," said Claude.

"So then," replied the inspector, walking along, "you have not had enough with twenty-four hours in the blackhole."

Claude, following him closely, replied: "Sir, return my companion to me!"

"Impossible!"

"Sir," continued Claude, in a voice which would have moved Satan, "I implore you to send Albin back to me; you will then see how I will work. You are free, and it would matter but little to you; you do not know the feeling of having only one friend. To me it is everything, encircled by the prison walls. You can come and go at your pleasure; I have but Albin. Pray let him come back to me! You know well he shared his food with me. What can it matter to you that a man named Claude Gueux should be in this hall, having another by his side called Albin? You have but to say 'Yes,' nothing more. Sir, my good sir, I implore you in the name of Heaven to grant my prayer!"

Claude, overcome with emotion, waited for the answer.

"Impossible!" replied the inspector, impatiently; "I will not recall my words. Now go, you annoyance!" And with that he hurried on toward the outer door, amid the breathless silence maintained by the eighty-one thieves.

Claude, following and touching the inspector, gently asked:

"Let me at least know why I am condemned to death. Why did you separate us?"

"I have already answered you: because I chose," replied the inspector.

With that he was about to lift the latch, when Claude raised the ax, and without one cry the inspector fell to the ground, with his skull completely cloven from three heavy blows dealt with the rapidity of lightning. A fourth completely disfigured his face, and Claude, in his mad fury, gave another and a useless blow; for the inspector was dead.

Claude, throwing the ax aside, cried out, "Now for the other!"

The other was himself; and taking the scissors, *his wife's,* he plunged them into his breast. But the blade was short, and the chest was deep, and vainly he strove to give the fatal blow. At last covered with blood, he fell fainting across the dead. Which of the two would be considered the victim?

When Claude recovered consciousness he was in bed, surrounded by every care and covered with bandages. Near him were Sisters of Charity, and a recorder, ready to take down his deposition, who with much interest inquired how he was. Claude had lost a great deal of blood; but the scissors had done him a bad turn, inflicting wounds not one of which was dangerous: the only mortal blows he had struck were on the body of Monsieur D——. Then the interrogator commenced.

"Did you kill the inspector of the prison workshops at Clarvaux?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Why did you do so?"

"Because I did."

Claude's wounds assumed a more serious aspect, and he was prostrated with a fever which threatened his life. November, December, January, February passed, in nursing and preparations, and Claude in turn was visited by doctor and judge—the one to restore him to health, the other to glean the evidence needful to send him to the scaffold.

On the 16th of March, 1832, perfectly cured, Claude appeared in court at Troyes, to answer the charge brought against him. His appearance impressed the court favorably; he had been shaved and stood bareheaded, but still clad in prison garb. The court was well guarded by a strong military guard, to keep the witnesses within bounds, as they were all convicts.

But an unexpected difficulty occurred: not one of these men would give evidence; neither questions nor threats availed to make them break their silence, until Claude requested them to do so. Then they in turn gave a faithful account of the terrible event; and if one, from forgetfulness or affection for the accused, failed to relate the whole facts, Claude supplied the deficiency. At one time the women's tears fell fast.

The usher now called the convict Albin. He came in trembling with emotion and sobbing painfully, and

threw himself into Claude's arms. Turning to the Public Prosecutor, Claude said:

"Here is a convict who gives his food to the hungry," and stooping, he kissed Albin's hand.

All the witnesses having been examined, the counsel for the prosecution then rose to address the court. "Gentlemen of the jury, society would be utterly put to confusion if a public prosecution did not condemn great culprits like him, who," etc.

After the long address by the prosecution, Claude's counsel rose.

Then followed the usual pleading for and against, which ever takes place at the criminal court.

Claude in his turn gave evidence, and every one was astonished at his intelligence; there appeared far more of the orator about this poor workman than the assassin. In a clear and straightforward way he detailed the facts as they were—standing proudly there, resolved to tell the whole truth. At times the crowd was carried away by his eloquence. This man, who could not read, would grasp the most difficult points of argument, yet treat the judges with all due deference. Once Claude lost his temper, when the counsel for the prosecution stated that he had assassinated the inspector without provocation.

"What!" cried Claude, "I had no provocation? Indeed! A drunkard strikes me—I kill him; then you would allow there was provocation, and the penalty of death would be changed for that of the galleys. But a man who wounds me in every way during four years, humiliates me for four years, taunts me daily,

hourly, for four years, and heaps every insult on my head—what follows? You consider I have had no provocation! I had a wife for whom I robbed—he tortured me about her. I had a child for whom I robbed—he taunted me about this child. I was hungry, a friend shared his bread with me—he took away my friend. I begged him to return my friend to me—he cast me into a dungeon. I told him how much I suffered—he said it wearied him to listen. What then would you have me do? I took his life; and you look upon me as a monster for killing this man, and you decapitate me; then do so."

Provocation such as this the law fails to acknowledge, because the blows leave no marks to show.

The judge then summed up the case in a clear and impartial manner—dwelling on the life Claude had led, living openly with an improper character; then he had robbed, and ended by being a murderer. All this was true. Before the jury retired, the judge asked Claude if he had any questions to ask, or anything to say.

"Very little," said Claude. "I am a murderer, I am a thief; but I ask you, gentlemen of this jury, why did I kill? Why did I steal?"

The jury retired for a quarter of an hour, and according to the judgment of these twelve countrymen—*gentlemen of the jury,* as they are styled—Claude Gueux was condemned to death. At the very outset several of them were much impressed with the name of Gueux (vagabond), and that influenced their decision.

When the verdict was pronounced, Claude simply said: "Very well; but there are two questions these gentlemen have not answered. Why did this man steal? What made him a murderer?"

He made a good supper that night, exclaiming, "Thirty-six years have now passed me." He refused to make any appeal until the last minute, but at the instance of one of the sisters who nursed him he consented to do so. She in her fulness of heart gave him a five-franc piece.

His fellow-prisoners, as we have already noticed, were devoted to him, and placed all the means at their disposal to help him to escape. They threw into his dungeon, through the air-hole, a nail, some wire, the handle of a pail: any one of these would have been enough for a man like Claude to free himself from his chains. He gave them all up to the warder.

On the 8th of June, 1832, seven months and four days after the murder, the recorder of the court came, and Claude was told that he had but one hour more to live, for his appeal had been rejected.

"Indeed," said Claude, coldly; "I slept well last night, and doubtless I shall pass my next even better."

First came the priest, then the executioner. He was humble to the priest, and listened to him with great attention, regretting much that he had not had the benefit of religious training, at the same time blaming himself for much in the past. He was courteous in his manner to the executioner; in fact he gave up all—his soul to the priest, his body to the executioner.

While his hair was being cut, some one mentioned how the cholera was spreading, and Troyes at any moment might become a prey to this fearful scourage. Claude joined in the conversation, saying, with a smile, "There is one thing to be said—I have no fear of the cholera!" He had broken half of the scissors—what remained he asked the jailor to give to Albin; the other half lay buried in his chest. He also wished the day's rations to be taken to his friend. The only trifle he retained was the five-franc piece that the sister had given him, which he kept in his right hand after he was bound.

At a quarter to eight the dismal procession usual in such cases left the prison. Pale, but with a firm tread, Claude Gueux slowly mounted the scaffold, keeping his eyes fixed on the crucifix the priest carried —an emblem of the Saviour's suffering. He wished to embrace the priest and the executioner, thanking the one and pardoning the other; the executioner simply repulsed him. Just before he was bound to the infernal machine, he gave the five-franc piece to the priest saying, "For the poor."

The hour had scarcely struck its eight chimes, when this man, so noble, so intelligent, received the fatal blow which severed his head from his body.

A market-day had been chosen for the time of execution, as there would be more people about; for there are still in France small towns that glory in having an execution. The guillotine that day remained, inflaming the imagination of the mob to such an extent that one of the tax-gatherers was nearly

murdered. Such is the admirable effect of public executions!

We have given the history of Claude Gueux's life, more to solve a difficult problem than for aught else. In his life there are two questions to be considered—before his fall and after his fall. What was his training and what was the penalty? This must interest society generally; for this man was well gifted, his instincts were good. Then what was wanting? On this revolves the grand problem which would place society on a firm basis.

What Nature has begun in the individual, let society carry out. Look at Claude Gueux. An intelligent and most noble-hearted man, placed in the midst of evil surroundings, he turned thief. Society placed him in a prison where the evil was yet greater, and he ended with becoming a murderer. Can we really blame him, or ourselves?—questions which require deep thought, or the result will be that we shall be compelled to shirk this most important subject. The facts are now before us, and if the government gives no thought to the matter, what are the rulers about? . . . . . .

A BAL MASQUÉ

BY ALEXANDRE DAVY DE LA PAILLETERIE DUMAS

The name of the author of "The Three Musketeers," "The Count of Monte Cristo," etc., appears on the title-page of two hundred and eighty-two volumes of stories, romances, and plays. He had ten assistants, who worked out details for him, the generals over whom he was Napoleon, to quote his own phrase.

Alexandre Dumas, called Père, to distinguish him from his son, the famous dramatist, was born in 1803 at Villers-Cotterets. He was entirely self-educated, devoting most of his time to the study of French history. He had extraordinary genius in imparting dramatic life and action to whatever he touched, and the whole modern school of historical writers is largely indebted to him for inspiration, as he himself is indebted to Walter Scott.

The short stories of the elder Dumas are collected in two volumes. The "Bal Masqué," taken from the earlier volume, is an admirable bit of story-telling, and every line seems to be a well of thought, a vista of suggestion. Dumas died in 1870.

A BAL MASQUÉ

BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS

I SAID that I was in to no one; one of my friends forced admission.

My servant announced Mr. Anthony R——. Behind Joseph's livery I saw the corner of a black redingote[1]; it is probable that the wearer of the redingote, from his side, saw a flap of my dressing gown; impossible to conceal myself.

"Very well! Let him enter," I said out loud. "Let him go to the Devil," I said to myself.

While working it is only the woman you love who can disturb you with impunity, for she is always at bottom interested in what you are doing.

I went up to him, therefore, with the half-bored face of an author interrupted in one of those moments of sorest self-mistrust, while I found him so pale and haggard that the first words I addressed to him were these:

"What is the matter? What has happened to you?"

"Oh! Let me take breath," said he. "I'm going to tell you all about it, besides, it's a dream perhaps, or perhaps I am mad."

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[1] Redingote is a French corruption of the English word "riding coat" and means generally a long, plain double-breasted street coat.

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He threw himself into an armchair, and let his head drop between his hands.

I looked at him in astonishment; his hair was dripping with rain; his shoes, his knees, and the bottom of his trousers were covered with mud. I went to the window; I saw at the door his servant and his cabriolet; I could make nothing out of it all.

He saw my surprise.

"I have been to the cemetery of Père-Lachaise," said he.

"At ten o'clock in the morning?"

"I was there at seven—cursed bal masqué!"

I could not imagine what a bal masqué and Père-Lachaise had to do with one another. I resigned myself, and turning my back to the mantelpiece began to roll a cigarette for him between my fingers with the phlegm and the patience of a Spaniard.

While he was coming to the point I hinted to Anthony that I, for my part, was commonly very susceptible to attentions of that kind.

He made me a sign of thanks, but pushed my hand away.

Finally I bent over to light the cigarette for myself: Anthony stopped me.

"Alexandre," he said to me, "Listen, I beg of you."

"But you have been here already a quarter of an hour and have not told me anything."

"Oh! it is a most strange adventure."

I got up, placed my cigarette on the mantelpiece and crossed my arms like a man resigned; only I began to believe, as he did, that he was fast becoming mad.

"You remember the ball at the Opéra, where I met you?" he said to me after a moment's silence.

"The last one where there were at least two hundred people?"

"The very same. I left you with the intention of abandoning myself to one of those varieties of which they spoke to me as being a curiosity even in the midst of our curious times; you wished to dissuade me from going; a fatality drove me on. Oh! you, why did you not see it all, you who have the knack of observation? Why were not Hoffman or Callot there to paint the picture as the fantastic, burlesque thing kept unrolling itself beneath my eyes? Unsatisfied and in melancholy mood I walked away, about to quit the Opéra; I came to a hall that was overflowing and in high spirits: corridors, boxes, parterre. Everything was obstructed. I made a tour of the room; twenty masks called me by name and told me theirs. These were all leaders—aristocrats and merchants—in the undignified disguise of pierrots, of postilions, of merry-andrews, or of fishwives. They were all young people of family, of culture, of talent; and there, forgetful of family, talent, breeding, they were resurrecting in the midst of our sedate and serious times a soirée of the Regency. They had told me about it, and yet I could not have believed it!— I mounted a few steps and leaning against a pillar, half hidden by it, I fixed my eyes on that sea of human beings surging beneath me. Their dominoes, of all colors, their motley costumes, their grotesque disguises formed a spectacle resembling nothing

human. The music began to play. Oh, it was then these gargoyle creatures stirred themselves to the sound of that orchestra whose harmony reached me only in the midst of cries, of laughs, of hootings; they hung on to each other by their hands, by their arms, by their necks; a long coil formed itself, beginning with a circular motion, the dancers, men and women, stamping with their feet, made the dust break forth with a noise, the atoms of which were rendered visible by the wan light of the lustres; turning at ever-increasing speed with bizarre postures, with unseemly gestures, with cries full of abandonment; turning always faster and still faster, swaying and swinging like drunken men, yelling like lost women, with more delirium than delight, with more passion than pleasure; resembling a coil of the damned doing infernal penance under the scourge of demons! All this passed beneath my eyes, at my feet. I felt the wind of their whirling past; as they rushed by each one whom I knew flung a word at me that made me blush. All this noise, all this humming, all this confusion, all this music went on in my brain as well as in the room! I soon came to the point of no longer knowing whether that which I had before my eyes was a dream or reality; I came to the point of asking myself whether it was not I who was mad and they who were sane; I was seized with a weird temptation to throw myself into the midst of this pandemonium, like Faust through the Witches' Sabbath, and I felt that I too, would then have cries, postures, laughs like theirs. Oh! from that to madness there is but one

step. I was appalled; I flung myself out of the room, followed even to the street door by shrieks that were like those cries of passion that come out of the caverns of the fallow deer.

"I stopped a moment under the portico to collect myself; I did not wish to venture into the street; with such confusion still in my soul I might not be able to find my way; I might, perhaps, be thrown under the wheels of some carriage I had not seen coming. I was as a drunken man might be who begins to recover sufficient reason in his clouded brain to recognize his condition, and who, feeling the will return but not the power, with fixed eyes and staring, leans motionless against some street post or some tree on the public promenade.

"At that moment a carriage stopped before the door, a woman alighted or rather shot herself from the doorway.

"She entered beneath the peristyle, turning her head from right to left like one who had lost her way; she was dressed in a black domino, had her face covered by a velvet mask. She presented herself at the door.

" 'Your ticket,' said the door-keeper.

" 'My ticket?' she replied. 'I have none.'

" 'Then get one at the box-office.'

"The domino came back under the peristyle, fumbled nervously about in all her pockets.

" 'No money!' she cried. 'Ah! this ring—a ticket of admission for this ring,' she said.

" 'Impossible,' replied the woman who was dis-

tributing the cards; 'we do not make bargains of that kind.'

"And she pushed away the brilliant, which fell to the ground and rolled to my side.

"The domino remained still without moving, forgetting the ring, sunk in thought.

"I picked up the ring and handed it to her.

"Through her mask I saw her eyes fixed on mine.

" 'You must help me to get in,' she said to me; 'You must, for pity's sake.'

" 'But I am going out, madame,' I said to her.

" 'Then give me six francs for this ring, and you will render me a service for which I shall bless you my life long.'

"I replaced the ring on her finger; I went to the box-office, I took two tickets. We reentered together.

"As we arrived within the corrider I felt that she was tottering. Then with her second hand she made a kind of ring around my arm.

" 'Are you in pain?' I asked her.

" 'No, no, it is nothing,' she replied, 'a dizziness, that is all—'

"She hurried me into the hall.

"We reentered into that giddy Charenton.[2]

"Three times we made the tour, breaking our way with great difficulty through the waves of masks that were hurling themselves one upon the other; she trembling at every unseemly word that came to her ear; I blushing to be seen giving my arm to a woman who

[2] Charenton Saint **Maurice, the** lunatic asylum near Paris, commonly designated **as Charenton.**

would thus put herself in the way of such words; then we returned to the end of the hall.

"She fell upon a sofa. I remained standing in front of her, my hand leaning on the back of her seat.

" 'Oh! this must seem to you very bizarre,' she said, 'but not more so than to me, I swear to you. I have not the slightest idea of all this' (she looked at the ball), 'for even in my dreams I could not imagine such things. But they wrote me, you see, that he would be here with a woman, and what sort of a woman should it be who could come to a place like this?'

"I made a gesture of surprise; she understood.

" 'But *I* am here, you wish to ask, do you not? Oh! but for me that is another thing: I, I am looking for him; I, I am his wife. As for these people, it is madness and dissipation that drives them hither. But I, I, it is jealousy infernal! I have been everywhere looking for him; I have been all night in a cemetery; I have been at Grève [3] on the day of an execution; and yet, I swear to you, as a young girl I have never once gone into the street without my mother; as a wife I have never taken one step out of doors without being followed by a lackey; and yet here I am, the same as all these women who are so familiar with the way; here I am giving my arm to a man whom I do not know, blushing under my mask at the opinion he ought to have of me! I know all this!—Have you ever been jealous, monsieur?'

[3] The name of a public square in Paris where executions formerly took place.

" 'Unhappily,' I replied to her.

" 'Then you will forgive me, for you understand. You know that voice that cries out to you "Do!" as in the ear of a madman; you have felt that arm that pushes one into shame and crime, like the arm of fate. You know that at such a moment one is capable of everything, if one can only get vengeance.'

"I was about to reply; all at once she rose, her eyes fastened on two dominoes that were passing in front of us at that moment.

" 'Silence!' she said.

"And she hurried me on following in their footsteps. I was thrown into the middle of an intrigue of which I understood nothing; I could feel all the threads vibrating, but could take hold of none of them by the end; but this poor wife seemed so troubled that she became interesting. I obeyed like a child, so imperious is real feeling, and we set ourselves to follow the two masks, one of which was evidently a man, the other a woman. They spoke in a low voice; the sounds reached our ears with difficulty.

" 'It is he!' she murmured; 'it is his voice; yes, yes, that is his figure—'

"The latter of the two dominoes began to laugh.

" 'That is his laugh,' said she; 'it is he, monsieur, it is he! The letter said true, O, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!'

"In the mean while the two masks kept on, and we followed them always. They went out of the hall, and we went out after them; they took the stairs leading to the boxes, and we ascended in their footsteps;

they did not stop till they came to the boxes in the centre; we were like their two shadows. A little closed box was opened; they entered it; the door again closed upon them.

"The poor creature I was supporting on my arm frightened me by her excitement. I could not see her face, but crushed against me as she was, I could feel her heart beating, her body shivering, her limbs trembling. There was something uncanny in the way there came to me such knowledge of unheard-of suffering, the spectacle of which I had before my very eyes, of whose victim I knew nothing, and of the cause of which I was completely ignorant. Nevertheless, for nothing in this world would I have abandoned that woman at such a moment.

"As she saw the two masks enter the box and the box close upon them, she stopped still a moment, motionless, and as if overwhelmed. Then she sprang forward to the door to listen. Placed as she was her slightest movement would betray her presence and ruin her; I dragged her back violently by the arm, I lifted the latch of the adjoining box, I drew her in after me, I lowered the grille and pulled the door to.

" 'If you wish to listen,' I said to her, 'at least listen from here.'

"She fell upon one knee and flattened her ear against the partition, and I—I held myself erect on the opposite side, my arms crossed, my head bent and thoughtful.

"All that I had been able to observe of that woman seemed to me to indicate a type of beauty. The lower

part of her face, which was not concealed by her mask, was youthful, velvety, and round; her lips were scarlet and delicate; her teeth, which the black velvet mask falling just above them made appear still whiter, were small, separated, and glistening; her hand was one to be modeled, her figure to be held between the fingers; her black hair, silky, escaped in profusion from beneath the hood of her domino, and the foot of a child, that played in and out under her skirt, looked as if it should have trouble in balancing her body, all lithe, all graceful, all airy as it was. Oh! what a marvelous piece of perfection must she be! Oh! he that should hold her in his arms, that should see every faculty of that spirit absorbed in loving him, that should feel the beating of her heart against his, her tremblings, her nervous palpitations, and that should be able to say: 'All of this, all of this, comes of love, of love for me, for me alone among all the millions of men, for me, angel predestined! Oh! that man!—that man!—'

"Such were my thoughts, when all at once I saw that woman rise, turn toward me, and say to me in a voice broken and fierce:

" 'Monsieur, I am beautiful, I swear it; I am young, I am but nineteen. Until now I have been white as an angel of the Creation—ah, well—' she threw both arms about my neck, '—ah, well, I am yours—take me!—'

"At the same instant I felt her lips pressed close to mine, and the effect of a bite, rather than that of a kiss, ran shuddering and dismayed through my whole body; over my eyes passed a cloud of flame.

"Ten minutes later I was holding her in my arms, in a swoon, half dead and sobbing.

"Slowly she came to herself; through her mask I made out how haggard were her eyes; I saw the lower part of her pale face, I heard her teeth chatter one upon the other, as in the chill of a fever. I see it all once more.

"She remembered all that had taken place, and fell at my feet.

" 'If you have any compassion,' she said to me, sobbing, 'any pity, turn away your eyes from me, never seek to know me; let me go and forget me. I will remember for two!'

"At these words she rose again; quickly, like a thought that escapes us, she darted toward the door, opened it, and coming back again, 'Do not follow me, in heaven's name, Monsieur, do not follow me!' she said.

"The door pushed violently open, closed again between her and me, stole her from my sight, like an apparition. I have never seen her more!

"I have never seen her more! And ever since, ever since the six months that have glided by, I have sought her everywhere, at balls, at spectacles, at promenades. Every time I have seen from a distance a woman with lithe figure, with a foot like a child's, with black hair, I have followed her, I have drawn near to her, I have looked into her face, hoping that her blushes would betray her. Nowhere have I found her again, in no place have I seen her again—except at night, except in my dreams! Oh! there, there she reappears; there

I feel her, I feel her embraces, her biting caresses so ardent, as if she had something of the devil in her; then the mask has fallen and a face most grotesque appeared to me at times blurred as if veiled in a cloud; sometimes brilliant, as if circled by an aureole; sometimes pale, with a skull white and naked, with eyes vanished from the orbits, with teeth chattering and few. In short, ever since that night, I have ceased to live; burning with mad passion for a woman I do not know, hoping always and always disappointed at my hopes. Jealous without the right to be so, without knowing of whom to be jealous, not daring to avow such madness, and all the time pursued, preyed upon, wasted away, consumed by her."

As he finished these words he tore a letter from his breast.

"Now that I have told you everything," he said to me, "take this letter and read it."

I took the letter and read:

"Have you perhaps forgotten a poor woman who has forgotten nothing and who dies because she can not forget?

"When you receive this letter I shall be no more. Then go to the cemetery of Père-Lachaise, tell the concierge to let you see among the newest graves one that bears on its stone the simple name 'Marie,' and when you are face to face with that grave, fall on your knees and pray."

"Ah, well!" continued Anthony, "I received that letter yesterday, and I went there this morning. The concierge conducted me to the grave, and I remained

two hours on my knees there, praying and weeping. Do you understand? She was there, that woman. Her flaming spirit had stolen away; the body consumed by it had bowed, even to breaking, beneath the burden of jealousy and of remorse; she was there, under my feet, and she had lived, and she had died, for me unknown; unknown!—and taking a place in my life as she had taken one in the grave; unknown! —and burying in my heart a corpse, cold and lifeless, as she had buried one in the sepulchre—Oh! Do you know anything to equal it? Do you know any event so appalling? Therefore, now, no more hope. I will see her again never. I would dig up her grave that I might recover, perhaps, some traces wherewithal to reconstruct her face; and I love her always! Do you understand, Alexandre? I love her like a madman; and I would kill myself this instant in order to rejoin her, if she were not to remain unknown to me for eternity, as she was unknown to me in this world."

With these words he snatched the letter from my hands, kissed it over and over again, and began to weep like a little child.

I took him in my arms, and not knowing what to say to him, I wept with him.

HOW THE REDOUBT WAS TAKEN

BY PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

Prosper Mérimée, novelist, historian, dramatist, and critic, was born in Paris in 1803. Rarely gifted and highly educated, he held various offices in the civil service, was an Academician, and in 1853 a Senator of the Empire. He was a great traveler, and through his tact and engaging personality was welcomed among all classes, observing wherever he went, and gathering material for his stories, in which a great variety of types are noticeable. His literary style—clear, simple, artistic—is considered a model of restraint and conciseness. "Carmen," on which Bizet's opera is founded, and the novel, "Columba," are probably the best known of his works. The latter part of his life he devoted to introducing through his own translation the great Russian authors, Poushkin, Gogol, and Turgenev. The famous "Lettres à une Inconnue" were published after his death at Cannes, in 1870, where they have lately erected a monument to him.

HOW THE REDOUBT WAS TAKEN

BY PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

A FRIEND of mine, a soldier, who died in Greece of fever some years since, described to me one day his first engagement. His story so impressed me that I wrote it down from memory. It was as follows:

I joined my regiment on September 4th. It was evening. I found the colonel in the camp. He received me rather bruskly, but having read the general's introductory letter he changed his manner and addressed me courteously.

By him I was presented to my captain, who had just come in from reconnoitring. This captain, whose acquaintance I had scarcely time to make, was a tall, dark man, of harsh, repelling aspect. He had been a private soldier, and had won his cross and epaulettes upon the field of battle. His voice, which was hoarse and feeble, contrasted strangely with his gigantic stature. This voice of his he owed, as I was told, to a bullet which had passed completely through his body at the battle of Jena.

On learning that I had just come from college at Fontainebleau, he remarked, with a wry face: "My lieutenant died last night."

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I understood what he implied, "It is for you to take his place, and you are good for nothing."

A sharp retort was on my tongue, but I restrained it.

The moon was rising behind the redoubt of Cheverino, which stood two cannon-shots from our encampment. The moon was large and red, as is common at her rising; but that night she seemed to me of extraordinary size. For an instant the redoubt stood out coal-black against the glittering disk. It resembled the cone of a volcano at the moment of eruption.

An old soldier, at whose side I found myself, observed the color of the moon.

"She is very red," he said. "It is a sign that it will cost us dear to win this wonderful redoubt."

I was always superstitious, and this piece of augury, coming at that moment, troubled me. I sought my couch, but could not sleep. I rose, and walked about a while, watching the long line of fires upon the heights beyond the village of Cheverino.

When the sharp night air had thoroughly refreshed my blood I went back to the fire. I rolled my mantle round me, and I shut my eyes, trusting not to open them till daybreak. But sleep refused to visit me. Insensibly my thoughts grew doleful. I told myself that I had not a friend among the hundred thousand men who filled that plain. If I were wounded, I should be placed in hospital, in the hands of ignorant and careless surgeons. I called to mind what I had heard of operations. My heart beat violently, and I mechanically arranged, as a kind of rude cuirass, my

handkerchief and pocketbook upon my breast. Then, overpowered with weariness, my eyes closed drowsily, only to open the next instant with a start at some new thought of horror.

Fatigue, however, at last gained the day. When the drums beat at daybreak I was fast asleep. We were drawn up in ranks. The roll was called, then we stacked our arms, and everything announced that we should pass another uneventful day.

But about three o'clock an aide-de-camp arrived with orders. We were commanded to take arms.

Our sharpshooters marched into the plain. We followed slowly, and in twenty minutes we saw the outposts of the Russians falling back and entering the redoubt. We had a battery of artillery on our right, another on our left, but both some distance in advance of us. They opened a sharp fire upon the enemy, who returned it briskly, and the redoubt of Cheverino was soon concealed by volumes of thick smoke. Our regiment was almost covered from the Russians' fire by a piece of rising ground. Their bullets (which besides were rarely aimed at us, for they preferred to fire upon our cannoneers) whistled over us, or at worst knocked up a shower of earth and stones.

Just as the order to advance was given, the captain looked at me intently. I stroked my sprouting mustache with an air of unconcern; in truth, I was not frightened, and only dreaded lest I might be thought so. These passing bullets aided my heroic coolness, while my self-respect assured me that the danger was

a real one, since I was veritably under fire. I was delighted at my self-possession, and already looked forward to the pleasure of describing in Parisian drawing-rooms the capture of the redoubt of Cheverino.

The colonel passed before our company. "Well," he said to me, "you are going to see warm work in your first action."

I gave a martial smile, and brushed my cuff, on which a bullet, which had struck the earth at thirty paces distant, had cast a little dust.

It appeared that the Russians had discovered that their bullets did no harm, for they replaced them by a fire of shells, which began to reach us in the hollows where we lay. One of these, in its explosion, knocked off my shako and killed a man beside me.

"I congratulate you," said the captain, as I picked up my shako. "You are safe now for the day."

I knew the military superstition which believes that the axiom *"non bis in idem"* is as applicable to the battlefield as to the courts of justice. I replaced my shako with a swagger.

"That's a rude way to make one raise one's hat," I said, as lightly as I could. And this wretched piece of wit was, in the circumstances, received as excellent.

"I compliment you," said the captain. "You will command a company to-night; for I shall not survive the day. Every time I have been wounded the officer below me has been touched by some spent ball; and," he added, in a lower tone, "all the names began with P."

I laughed skeptically; most people would have done the same; but most would also have been struck, as I was, by these prophetic words. But, conscript though I was, I felt that I could trust my thoughts to no one, and that it was my duty to seem always calm and bold.

At the end of half an hour the Russian fire had sensibly diminished. We left our cover to advance on the redoubt.

Our regiment was composed of three battalions. The second had to take the enemy in flank; the two others formed a storming party. I was in the third.

On issuing from behind the cover, we were received by several volleys, which did but little harm. The whistling of the balls amazed me. "But after all," I thought, "a battle is less terrible than I expected."

We advanced at a smart run, our musketeers in front.

All at once the Russians uttered three hurrahs—three distinct hurrahs—and then stood silent, without firing.

"I don't like that silence," said the captain. "It bodes no good."

I began to think our people were too eager. I could not help comparing, mentally, their shouts and clamor with the striking silence of the enemy.

We quickly reached the foot of the redoubt. The palisades were broken and the earthworks shattered by our balls. With a roar of "Vive l'Empereur," our soldiers rushed across the ruins.

I raised my eyes. Never shall I forget the sight which met my view. The smoke had mostly lifted, and remained suspended, like a canopy, at twenty feet above the redoubt. Through a bluish mist could be perceived, behind the shattered parapet, the Russian Grenadiers, with rifles lifted, as motionless as statues. I can see them still—the left eye of every soldier glaring at us, the right hidden by his lifted gun. In an embrasure at a few feet distant, a man with a fuse stood by a cannon.

I shuddered. I believed that my last hour had come.

"Now for the dance to open," cried the captain. These were the last words I heard him speak.

There came from the redoubts a roll of drums. I saw the muzzles lowered. I shut my eyes; I heard a most appalling crash of sound, to which succeeded groans and cries. Then I looked up, amazed to find myself still living. The redoubt was once more wrapped in smoke. I was surrounded by the dead and wounded. The captain was extended at my feet; a ball had carried off his head, and I was covered with his blood. Of all the company, only six men, except myself, remained erect.

This carnage was succeeded by a kind of stupor. The next instant the colonel, with his hat on his sword's point, had scaled the parapet with a cry of "Vive l'Empereur." The survivors followed him. All that succeeded is to me a kind of dream. We rushed into the redoubt, I know not how, we fought hand to hand in the midst of smoke so thick that no man could perceive his enemy. I found my sabre drip-

ping blood; I heard a shout of "Victory"; and, in the clearing smoke, I saw the earthworks piled with dead and dying. The cannons were covered with a heap of corpses. About two hundred men in the French uniform were standing, without order, loading their muskets or wiping their bayonets. Eleven Russian prisoners were with them.

The colonel was lying, bathed in blood, upon a broken cannon. A group of soldiers crowded round him. I approached them.

"Who is the oldest captain?" he was asking of a sergeant.

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders most expressively.

"Who is the oldest lieutenant?"

"This gentleman, who came last night," replied the sergeant calmly.

The colonel smiled bitterly.

"Come, sir," he said to me, "you are now in chief command. Fortify the gorge of the redoubt at once with wagons, for the enemy is out in force. But General C—— is coming to support you."

"Colonel," I asked him, "are you badly wounded?"

"Pish, my dear fellow. The redoubt is taken."

THE VENDEAN MARRIAGE

BY JULES GABRIEL JANIN

Thackeray, writing from Paris to Mrs. Brookfield in 1849, says of Jules Janin: "He has made his weekly feuilleton (the Journal des Débats), famous throughout Europe—he does not know a word of English, but he translated Sterne and I think 'Clarissa Harlowe.' He has the most wonderful verve, humor, oddity, honesty, bonhomie . . . bounced about the room, gesticulating, joking, gasconading, quoting Latin. . . ." We know that Janin was more concerned in amusing his readers and himself than imparting instruction—though he did both.

Jules Janin was born at Saint-Étienne in 1804, and died in Paris in 1874. In 1836 he entered on that famous career of forty years as dramatic critic of the "Journal des Débats." These contributions were afterward collected under the title "History of Dramatic Literature."

THE VENDEAN MARRIAGE

BY JULES JANIN

SO you have never heard the circumstances of Monsieur Baudelot de Dairval's marriage, the man who died four years ago, and was so mourned by his wife that she died a week later herself, good lady? Yet it is a story worth telling.

It happened in the Vendée, and the hero, a Vendean, brave, young, daring, and of fine family, died tranquilly in his bed without ever suspecting that there would be a second Vendée.

Baudelot de Dairval was the grandson of that César Baudelot who is mentioned in the Memoirs of the Duchess of Orleans, own mother of the regent Louis Philippe. This woman, who has thrown such contempt on the greatest names of France, could not help praising César de Baudelot. Saint-Simon, skeptic and mocker, but good fellow withal, also spoke highly of him. So you'll understand that bearing such a name young Henri was not lost to report in the first Vendée, to protest arms in hand against the excesses of the Revolution. Baudelot was a Vendean simply because a man of his name and nature could be nothing else. He fought like his associates, neither more nor less. He was the friend of Cathelmeau and of all the others. He took part in those battles of giants;

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he took part fighting stoutly, and then laughing and singing as soon as he no longer heard the cries of the wounded. What wars, what livid tempests were ever like those? But it is not my business to tell again the story so often told.

But I want to tell you that one day, surprised at a farm by a detachment of Blues, Baudelot unexpectedly called together his troop. "My friends," said he, "this farm is surrounded. You must all escape! Take with you the women and children. Rejoin our chief, Cathelmeau. As for me, I'll stay and defend the gate. I certainly can hold it alone for ten minutes. Those three thousand out there would massacre us all. Good-by, good-by, my brave fellows! Don't forget me! It's my turn to-day. You'll get yourselves killed to-morrow!"

In those exceptional times and in that exceptional war, nothing seemed astonishing. Men did not even think of those rivalries in heroism so frequent in elegant warfare. In such a struggle of extermination there was no time to pose for sublimity of soul. Heroism was quite unaffected. So Baudelot's soldiers judged for themselves that their chief spoke sensibly, and obeyed as simply as he had commanded. They withdrew by the roof, taking away the women and children. Baudelot remained at the door making noise enough for forty, haranguing, disputing and discharging his gun. One would have thought a whole regiment ready to fire was stationed there, and the Blues held themselves on the alert. Baudelot remained on the defensive as long as he had any voice. But when

that failed and he thought his troop must have reached a place of safety, he tired of the warlike feint. He felt ill at ease at thus commanding the absent; and keeping quiet, he merely propped up the door as it was shaken from outside. This lasted several minutes, then the door cracked, and the Blues began to fire through the fissures. Baudelot was not wounded, and as his meal had been interrupted, he returned to the table and tranquilly ate some bread and cheese, and emptied a pitcher of country wine, thinking meanwhile that this was his last repast!

Finally the Blues forced the door and rushed in. It took them some minutes to clear away obstructions, and to recognize each other in the smoke of their guns. These soldiers of the Republic hunted eagerly with look and sword for the armed troop which had withstood them so long. Judge their surprise at seeing only a tall, very handsome young man, calmly eating black bread moistened with wine. Dumb with astonishment the conquerors stopped and leaned on their guns, and thus gave Henri Baudelot time to swallow his last mouthful.

"To your health, gentlemen!" he said, lifting his glass to his lips. "The garrison thanks you for the respite you have granted." At the same time he rose, and going straight to the Captain, said: "Monsieur, I am the only person in this house. I am quite ready for death."

Then he kept quiet, and waited. To his great surprise he was not shot at once. Perhaps he had fallen into the hands of recruits so little exercised as to delay

twenty-four hours before killing a man. Perhaps his captors were moved by his coolness and fine bearing, and were ashamed at setting three hundred to kill one. We must remember that in that sad war there were French feelings on both sides.

So they contented themselves with tying his hands and leading him, closely watched, to a manor on the outskirts of Nantes, which, once an attractive country-seat, had now become a kind of fortress. Its master was no other than the chief of the Blues, who had captured Baudelot. This Breton, a gentleman although a Blue, had been one of the first to share revolutionary transports. He was one of those nobles so heroic to their own injury, who renounced in a day fortunes, coats of arms, and their own names, forgetting both what they had promised their fathers and what they owed to their sons, equally oblivious of past and future, and unfortunate victims of the present. But we will not reproach them, for either they died under the stroke of the Revolution, or lived long enough to see that all their sacrifices were vain.

Baudelot de Dairval was confined in the donjon, or, rather, in the pigeon-house of his conqueror. The doves had been expelled to give place to Chouan captives. Still covered with shining slates, still surmounted by its creaking weather-cock, this prison had retained a calm, gracious air, and it had not been thought necessary to bar the openings by which the pigeons came and went. Much as ever, a little straw had been added to the usual furniture.

At first the dovecote of a country manor struck him

as a novel prison. He decided that as soon as his hands were free he would compose a romance upon it, with a guitar accompaniment. While thus thinking, he heard a violin and other instruments playing a joyful march. By piling up the straw against the wall and leaning on it with his elbow, Baudelot could look out of one of the openings. He saw a long procession of young men and pretty women in white gowns, preceded by village fiddlers, and all merry and joyous. As it passed at the foot of the dovecote, a pretty girl looked up attentively. She was fair, slender and dreamy-looking. Baudelot felt that she knew of the prisoner, and he began to whistle the air of Richard, "In an Obscure Tower," or something of the kind. For this young man was versed in all kinds of combats and romances, equally skilful with sword and guitar, an adept at horsemanship, a fine dancer, a true gentleman of wit and sword, such as are manufactured no more.

The wedding procession passed, or, at least, if not a wedding it was a betrothal, and Baudelot stopped singing. He heard a sound at his prison door; some one entered.

It was the master of the house himself. He had been a Marquis under Capet, now he called himself simply Hamelin. He was a Blue, but a good fellow enough. The Republic ruled him body and soul; he lent his sword and his castle. But he had not become cruel or wicked in its service. The morning of this very day, Captain Hamelin, for so he had been appointed by the Republic, learned that some Chouans

were at his farm, had headed a detachment of Blues and postponed his betrothal. You know how he had seized Baudelot. As soon as the Chouan was in keeping the Captain had returned to his betrothal feast, and this is the reason why he did not shoot his prisoner at once or take him to Nantes.

Captain Hamelin was not so thorough a Blue as to have quite forgotten the hospitable old customs of Bretagne soil. Therefore, while his friends were sitting down to table, he felt it incumbent to call upon his captive.

"Can I do anything for you, monsieur?" he asked.

"Monsieur," said Baudelot, bowing, "I should like the use of at least one of my hands."

"Your hands shall be unbound, monsieur," answered Hamelin, "if you will promise not to try to escape. But before you promise, remember that at six o'clock to-morrow morning you will surely be taken to Nantes."

"And shot at eight o'clock just as surely?" asked Baudelot.

Captain Hamelin was silent.

"Very well, monsieur," said Baudelot. "Unbind my hands and unless I'm delivered, I give my word as a gentleman and a Christian to stay here like a pigeon with clipped wings."

Captain Hamelin could not help smiling at his prisoner's allusion, and untied his hands.

"Now," said Baudelot, stretching his arms like a man stiff from sleep, "now, monsieur, I thank you, and am truly your servant until to-morrow. It

will not be my fault if my gratitude does not last longer!"

Captain Hamelin said: "If you have any last arrangements—a will to make, for instance—I will send you writing materials." He was touched, for he was not a Breton for nothing.

"Seeing this, Baudelot took his hand. "Do you know," he said sadly, "that simple word 'will' wounds me more than the words 'death at Nantes!' It recalls that all my friends are dead. There is no one to whom I can bequeath my name, my sword, my love and my hate, and these are all I have left. Yet, it must be sweet to dispose of a fortune, to be generous even beyond the tomb; and while writing last benefits, to imagine the tears of joys and sorrow they will cause. That is sweet and honorable, isn't it, Captain? I must not think of it."

"I will send you some dinner," said Hamelin. "This is my day of betrothal, and my table is better provided than usual. My fiancée herself shall serve you, monsieur."

In one of the highest apertures of his cage, Baudelot saw a daisy which had been sown there by one of the first occupants of the dovecote. The pretty flower swayed joyously in the wind, and he gathered it and offered it to the Captain.

"It is our custom at home, Captain, to offer the bride a gift. Be so good as to give yours this little flower, which has blossomed in my domain. And now, good night. I have kept you from your loves long enough. May God remember your kindness toward me! Good-

by. Best wishes! Send me some supper, for I'm hungry and need rest."

And they separated with friendly looks.

Dinner was brought the young Vendean by a pretty Breton girl with white teeth, rosy lips and the pensive air which befitted a shy country maiden, who had already seen so many proscripts. She served him zealously, and gave him no peace if he did not eat of this or that dish, drink this or that wine. It was a magnificent repast. The dovecote grew fragrant. It was almost like the time when the winged occupants of the tower gathered crumbs from the feast. As the girl was pouring champagne, Baudelot said to her:

"What is your name, my child?"

"My name is Marie," she answered.

"The same as my cousin's," went on the young man; "and how old are you, Marie?"

"Seventeen years," said Marie.

"The age of my cousin," said Baudelot, and as he thought of his pretty cousin butchered by the executioner, his heart almost failed him. But he blushed to weep before this child in whose eyes tears were gathering, and as he could not speak, he held out his glass. But the glass was full, and in the last rays of the sun the champagne sparkled joyously, for wine sparkled and spring bloomed even during the Terror. Seeing that his glass was full, Baudelot said:

"You have no glass, Marie?"

"I am not thirsty," said Marie.

"Oh!" said Baudelot, "this bright wine does not like to be drunk by a man alone. It is convivial by

nature, and rejoices to be among boon companions. It is the great support of the Fraternity of which you have heard so much, my poor Marie, and which men really comprehend so little. Be friendly; dip your lips in my glass, my pretty Breton, if you would have me drink champagne once more before I die," and he lifted the glass to Marie's lips. She held them out, but at the words, "to die," her heart overflowed, and copious tears rolled into the joyous wine.

"To your health, Marie!" said Baudelot, and drank both wine and tears.

Just then they heard the horn, the hautboys, and the violins. "What's that?" said the young man setting down his glass. "God bless me, it's a ball!"

"Alas!" said Marie, "alas! yes, it's a ball. My young mistress did not want dancing, but her lover and her father insisted. She is very unhappy this evening."

"Oh!" said the young Vendean, "my good Marie, if you are as kind as I think, you'll do something for me! Go, run, fly, tell your mistress that Count Baudelot de Dairval, Colonel of Light Horse, requests permission to pay her his respects. Or, no; find my host, not his bride, and tell him that his prisoner is very dull, that the noise of the ball will prevent his sleeping, that the night will be long and cold, that it's a charity to snatch an unhappy young man from the sad thoughts of his last night, that I beg him, in Heaven's name, to let me attend his ball. Tell him he has my word of honor not to try to escape. Tell him all that, Marie; and tell him whatever else comes into your

heart and mind. Speak loud enough for your mistress to hear and be interested; and, thanks to you, Marie, I'm sure he will yield. Then, child, if I am invited, send your master's valet. Tell him to bring me clean linen and powder. There must be some powder still left in the castle. Tell him to bring me one of his master's coats, and get them to lend me my sword just for the evening. I will not unsheath it. So, Marie, go, child!" And the prisoner hurried her off and held her back in a way to make one both laugh and cry.

A few minutes later Captain Hamelin's valet appeared in the dovecote. He was a good old fellow, faithful to powder and to all the old customs. Although a member of the municipal council, he was an honest man, devoted to Monsieur Robespierre only because he alone in all republican France had dared to continue powder, ruffles, and embroidered vest.

He brought a complete suit, which Captain Hamelin had ordered when younger and a Marquis, to visit the court and see the King when there was a court and a King. This suit was very rich and handsome, the linen very white, the shoes very fine. Baudelot's host had forgotten nothing, not even the perfumes and cosmetics of an old-time Marquis. Baudelot confided his head to the valet, who adorned it complaisantly, not without profound sighs of regret. Baudelot was young and handsome, but had not been groomed for some time. Therefore when he saw himself dressed, curled and fresh shaven, his eyes animated by a good meal and by the music in the distance, he could not help smiling with self-content and recalling his beautiful nights at

the "bal masqué" and at the opera with the Count de Mirabeau.

He lacked only his sword, which was given him at the door with a reminder of his promise. It was night when he crossed the garden to the ballroom.

All the most beautiful republican ladies of the province were there. But you know women are not so revolutionary that they do not feel aristocratic sympathy for a young and handsome gentleman who is to be shot on the morrow.

To return to our story The betrothal ball had begun. The financée was Mademoiselle de Mailly, grandniece of the beautiful De Mailly so beloved of Madame de Maintenon. She was a sad young blonde, evidently unhappy at dancing and marrying in that period of proscription. She was one of those strong spirits which seem weak until a certain fatal hour has sounded, when apparent weakness becomes invincible energy. The heroine replaces the little girl, and the ruins of a whole world could not intimidate her, who, until then, trembled at the least sign of displeasure.

Eleanor de Mailly was then very dejected. The friends of her childhood imitated her silence and despondency. Never before was Bretagne feast so gloomy. Nothing went as it should, neither dance nor dancers, and there was general lack of ease. The young men did not even try to please the pretty girls, and when the ball had scarcely begun every one wished it would end.

Suddenly the door into the great hall opened, and every one looked that way. There entered a pretty

court gentleman, a lost type, a handsome officer, smiling and well dressed. He had the dress and elegant bearing of court. This apparition was in charming contrast with the dulness of the gathering. The men and women who were bluest at heart were delighted to find with them this remnant of the old French society so suddenly blotted out, alas! And, indeed, it was charming to see this young proscript, whom death on the morrow awaited, entering into this republican company, recalling its gaiety, and thinking of nothing but to be agreeable and please the ladies, faithful to the end to his calling of French gentleman!

His entrance took only a minute. Once in the room, he gave himself up to the ball and went to invite the first woman he saw. It was the blond girl whom he had noticed in the garden. She accepted without hesitation, remembering that republican death, the most unpleasant of all deaths, was offering her partner a bloody hand. When the men saw Baudelot dancing, doomed as he was, they blushed at their own lack of ardor. All the women were invited to dance at once, and accepted in order to see Baudelot nearer. So, thanks to the victim, the ball grew really gay.

Baudelot heartily shared this convulsive pleasure. His smile was not forced; his dance was light and graceful. He alone was genuinely entertained. The others amused themselves in very terror, and became almost delirious at sight of this beautiful youth, who was king of the fête far more than the bridegroom. Animated by such passion, terror, and bloody interest, the ball took possession of all. Baudelot was every-

where, saluting old ladies like the King of France, and young ones with joy and admiration, talking to men in the mad language of youth and of nature mixed with wit.

The more he yielded to this frank and natural gaiety, the more he forgot that the night was advancing with frightful rapidity. And the later it grew the more the women trembled in their hearts at the thought that he must really die, for they were near the epoch of old French honor, which made Baudelot's presence at the ball the sign that there was no hope for him. They knew his word bound him faster than iron chains could have done. They knew that both Baudelot and Hamelin were doing right. Baudelot's pleasure did no wrong to the committee of public safety. As you may imagine, then, looks and smiles were very tender, and more than one sigh escaped at sight of the handsome proscript. As for him, drunk with success, he had never been so full of love and passion. So when he went to dance for the third time with the queen of the ball, the blond fiancée, he felt her little hand trembling and trembled in his turn.

For when he glanced at her she was pale and exhausted.

"What is the matter, Eleanor?" he asked. "What is the matter, madame? Out of pity for your partner, do not tremble and grow so pale!"

Then turning toward the window curtains, which were moving to the dance music, she pointed out the dawning light.

"It is morning," she said.

"Ah, well!" said Baudelot, "what does it matter? It is morning. I have passed the most beautiful night of my life. I have seen you and loved you and been able to tell you I love you, for you know the dying don't lie. And now, good-by, Eleanor, good-by! Be happy and accept the blessing of the Chouan!"

It was the custom in Brittany at the end of the last square dance to kiss the lady on the forehead. The dance finished, Baudelot pressed his lips to Eleanor's brow. She grew faint and stood motionless, her brow supported by his lips. Then she recovered herself and Baudelot led her to a seat. She made him sit down beside her and said:

"Listen, you must go. Listen, they are harnessing the horses to take you to Nantes. Listen, in two hours you will be dead. Fly, then! If you wish, I will go with you. Then they will say you fled out of love, not from fear. Listen, if you will not escape alone, or with me, I will throw myself under the wheels of the carriage, and you will pass over my broken body!"

She said this in a low tone, without looking at him, and almost smiling, as though speaking of another ball.

Baudelot did not listen, but he looked at her with a joy in his heart such as he never before felt.

"How I love her!" he said to himself. He answered: "You know very well that is impossible, Eleanor. Oh, yes; if I were free, you should have no husband but me, but I do not belong either to myself or to you. So good-by, beautiful angel, and if you love me give me back the wild flower I sent you from my

prison. Give it back, Eleanor. The little flower has been on your breast, it will help me to die."

At that moment Eleanor looked like death. There was a solemn silence. The music had stopped, and daylight was filling the room.

Suddenly there was a great noise of horses and riders. It seemed to come from Nantes, and all the women moved spontaneously to protect Baudelot with their bodies, but his own soldiers appeared to deliver him. They were in the garden; they forced their way into the house, crying:

"Baudelot! Baudelot!"

They were astonished enough to find their young leader, not loaded with irons, but surrounded by handsomely dressed ladies and himself adorned as they had never beheld him.

Baudelot's first question was:

"Gentlemen, did you enter the pigeon-house?"

"Yes," was the answer. "That's where we began, Captain. Neither you nor the pigeons will find it again. The pigeon-house is torn down."

"Then," said Baudelot, drawing his sword, "I am released from my word. Thanks, my brave fellows!"

Then he took off his hat.

"Madame," he said very gently, "receive the humble gratitude of the captive."

He asked for a carriage.

"One is already harnessed, Captain," said one of his soldiers. "The owner of the house tells us it was to take you to Nantes."

Just then Baudelot noticed Hamelin bound with the fetters he himself had worn.

"Service for service, Captain," he said; "only, instead of untying your cords, allow me to cut them. No one shall wear them again."

Then, as he saw Eleanor recovering herself, he continued:

"Captain Hamelin, this period of civil war and spilled blood is too sad for betrothals. One can't tell whether there will be prisoners to watch in the morning or enemies to receive in the evening. Postpone your marriage, I beg of you. See, your fiancée herself wishes you to do so. My noble young lady, allow the poor Chouan to escort you back to your home at Mailly, will you not?"

And soon all the young Chouans galloped away, rejoicing to have delivered their Captain, and glorious in the rising sun. Poor fellows, they had so little time left, most of them, for the sunshine!

There are men who seem immortal whatever they do. Baudelot de Dairval was not killed although he did not leave Vendée for an hour. When his country was less inundated with blood he married Eleanor de Mailly, and Captain Hamelin witnessed the wedding contract.

THE MARQUISE

BY GEORGE SAND

"Of all modern French authors, George Sand has added to fiction the greatest number of original characters. Moreover, George Sand is, after Rousseau, the only great French author who has looked directly and lovingly into the face of nature."

Amandine Lucie Aurore Dupin, Baroness Dudevant, was born in Paris in 1804. She gave herself up to the study of nature, and in 1831 wrote "Rose et Blanche," and entered into her own kingdom of romance. It was Jules Sandeau who encouraged her in this, and whose name suggested the nom de plume of "George Sand."

In "Letters of a Traveler" and "Elle et Lui" we have her own account of her intimacy with Alfred de Musset, whose heart she broke. After a varied experience in politics, her genius widened until it produced masterpieces like "Indiana," "Consuelo," "La Petite Fadette." "The Marquise" is one of a long series of work written for the "Revue des Deux Mondes." George Sand died in 1876.

THE MARQUISE

BY GEORGE SAND

THE Marquise de R—— never said brilliant things, although it is the fashion in French fiction to make every old woman sparkle with wit. Her ignorance was extreme in all matters which contact with the world had not taught her, and she had none of that nicety of expression, that exquisite penetration, that marvelous tact, which belong, it is said, to women who have seen all the different phases of life and society; she was blunt, heedless, and sometimes very cynical. She put to flight every idea I have formed concerning the noble ladies of the olden times, yet she was a genuine Marquise and had seen the Court of Louis XV. But as she was an exceptional character, do not seek in her history for a study of the manners of any epoch.

I found much pleasure in the society of the lady. She seemed to me remarkable for nothing much except her prodigious memory for the events of her youth and the masculine lucidity with which she expressed her reminiscences. For the rest, she was, like all aged persons, forgetful of recent events and indifferent to everything in which she had any present personal concern.

Her beauty had not been of that piquant order,

which, though lacking in splendor and regularity, still gives pleasure in itself; she was not one of those women taught to be witty, in order to make as favorable an impression as those who are so by nature. The Marquise undoubtedly had had the misfortune to be beautiful. I have seen her portrait, for, like all old women, she was vain enough to hang it up for inspection in her apartments. She was represented in the character of a huntress nymph, with a low satin waist painted to imitate tiger-skin, sleeves of antique lace, bow of sandal-wood, and a crescent of pearl lighting up her hair. It was an admirable painting, and, above all, an admirable woman—tall, slender, dark, with black eyes, austere and noble features, unsmiling, deep red lips, and hands which, it was said, had thrown the Princess de Lamballe into despair. Without lace, satin, or powder, she might indeed have seemed one of those beautiful, proud nymphs fabled to appear to mortals in the depth of the forest or upon the solitary mountain-sides, only to drive them mad with passion and regret.

Yet the Marquise had made few acquaintances; according to her own account she had been thought dull and frivolous. The roués of that time cared less for the charms of beauty than for the allurements of coquetry; women infinitely less admired than she had robbed her of all her adorers, and, strange enough, she had seemed indifferent to her fate. The little she told me of her life made me believe that her heart had had no youth, and that a cold selfishness had paralyzed all its faculties. Still, her old age was adorned by sev-

eral sincere friends, and she gave alms without ostentation.

One evening I found her even more communicative than usual; there was much of sadness in her voice. "My child," she said, "the Vicomte de Larrieux has just died of the gout. It is a great sorrow to me, for I have been his friend these sixty years."

"What was his age?" I asked.

"Eighty-four. I am eighty, but not so infirm as he was, and I can hope to live longer. *N'importe!* Several of my friends have gone this year, and although I tell myself that I am younger and stronger than any of them, I can not help being frightened when I see my contemporaries dropping off around me."

"And these," said I, "are the only regrets you feel for poor Larrieux, a man who worshiped you for sixty years, who never ceased to complain of your cruelty, yet never revolted from his allegiance? He was a model lover: there are no more such men."

"My dear child," answered the Marquise, "I see that you think me cold and heartless. Perhaps you are right; judge for yourself. I will tell you my whole history, and, whatever opinion you may have of me, I shall, at least, not die without having made myself known to some one.

"When I was sixteen I left St. Cyr, where I had been educated, to marry the Marquis de R——. He was fifty, but I dared not complain, for every one congratulated me on this splendid match, and all my portionless companions envied my lot.

"I was never very bright, and at that time I was

positively stupid; the education of the cloister had completely benumbed my faculties. I left the convent with a romantic idea of life and of the world, stupidly considered a merit in young girls, but which often results in the misery of their whole lives. As a natural consequence, the experience brought me by my brief married life was lodged in so narrow a mind that it was of no use to me. I learned, not to understand life, but to doubt myself.

"I was a widow before I was seventeen, and as soon as I was out of mourning I was surrounded by suitors. I was then in all the splendor of my beauty, and it was generally admitted that there was neither face nor figure that could compare with mine; but my husband, an old, worn-out, dissipated man, who had never shown me anything but irony and disdain, and had married me only to secure an office promised with my hand, had left me such an aversion to marriage that I could never be brought to contract new ties. In my ignorance of life I fancied that all men resembled him, and that in a second husband I should find M. de R——'s hard heart, his pitiless irony, and that insulting coldness which had so deeply humiliated me.

This terrible entrance into life had dispelled for me all the illusions of youth. My heart, which perhaps was not entirely cold, withdrew into itself and grew suspicious. I was foolish enough to tell my real feelings to several women of my acquaintance. They did not fail to tell what they had learned, and without considering the doubts and anguish of my heart, boldly

declared that I despised all men. There is nothing men will resent more readily than this; my lovers soon learned to despise me, and continued their flatteries only in the hope of finding an opportunity to hold me up to ridicule. I saw mockery and treachery written upon every forehead, and my misanthropy increased every day. About this time there came to Paris from the Provinces a man who had neither talent, strength, nor fascination, but who possessed a frankness and uprightness of feeling very rare among the people with whom I lived. This was the Vicomte de Larrieux. He was soon acknowledged to be my most favored lover.

"He, poor fellow, loved me sincerely in his soul. His soul! Had he a soul? He was one of those hard, prosaic men who have not even the elegance of vice or the glitter of falsehood. He was struck only by my beauty; he took no pains to discover my heart. This was not disdain on his part, it was incapacity. Had he found in me the power of loving, he would not have known how to respond to it. I do not think there ever lived a man more wedded to material things than poor Larrieux. He ate with delight, and fell asleep in all the armchairs; the remainder of the time he took snuff. He was always occupied in satisfying some appetite. I do not think he had one idea a day. And yet, my dear friend, will you believe it? I never had the energy to get rid of him; for sixty years he was my torment. Constantly offended by my repulses, yet constantly drawn to me by the very obstacles I placed in the way of his passion, he had for me the

most faithful, the most undying, the most wearisome love that ever man felt for woman."

"I am surprised," said I, "that in the course of your life you never met a man capable of understanding you, and worthy of converting you to real love. Must we conclude that the men of to-day are superior to those of other times?"

"That would be a great piece of vanity on your part," she answered, smiling. "I have little reason to speak well of the men of my own time; yet I doubt, too, whether you have made much progress; but I will not moralize. The cause of my misfortune was entirely within myself. I had no tact, no judgment. A woman as proud as I was should have possessed a superior character, and should have been able to distinguish at a glance many of the insipid, false, insignificant men who surrounded me. I was too ignorant, too narrow-minded for this. As I lived on I acquired more judgment and have learned that several of the objects of my hatred deserved far other feelings.

"And while you were young," I rejoined, "were you never tempted to make a second trial? Was this deep-rooted aversion never shaken off? It is strange."

The Marquise was silent, then hastily laying her gold snuff-box on the table—"I have begun my confession," said she, "and I will acknowledge everything. Listen. Once, and only once, I have loved, with a love as passionate and indomitable as it was imaginative and ideal. For you see, my child, you young men think you understand women, but you know nothing about them. If many old women of eighty were occa-

sionally to tell you the history of their loves, you would perhaps find that the feminine soul contains sources of good and evil of which you have no idea. And now, guess what was the rank of the man for whom I entirely lost my head—I, a Marquise, and prouder and haughtier than any other."

"The King of France, or the Dauphin, Louis XIV."

"Oh, if you go on in that manner, it will be three hours before you come to my lover. I prefer to tell you at once—he was an actor."

"A king, notwithstanding, I imagine."

"The noblest, the most elegant that ever trod the boards. You are not amazed?"

"Not much. I have heard that such ill-sorted passions were not rare, even when the prejudices of caste in France were more powerful than they are to-day."

"Those ill-sorted passions were not tolerated by the world, I can assure you. The first time I saw him I expressed my admiration to the Comtesse de Ferriers, who happened to be beside me, and she answered: "Do not speak so warmly to any one but me. You would be cruelly taunted were you suspected of forgetting that in the eyes of a woman of rank an actor can never be a man."

"Madame Ferriers's words remained in my mind, I know not why. At the time this contemptuous tone of hers seemed to me absurd, and this fear of committing myself a piece of malicious hypocrisy.

"His name was Lelio; he was by birth an Italian, but spoke French admirably. He may have been thirty-five, although on the stage he often seemed less than

twenty. He played Corneille; after this he played Racine, and in both he was admirable."

"I am surprised," said I, interrupting the Marquise, "that his name does not appear in the annals of dramatic talent."

"He was never famous," she answered, "and was appreciated neither by the court nor the town. I have heard that he was outrageously hissed when he first appeared. Afterward he was valued for his feeling, his fire, and his efforts at correct elocution. He was tolerated and sometimes applauded, but, on the whole, he was always considered an actor without taste.

"In those days tragedy was played 'properly'; it was necessary to die with taste, to fall gracefully, and to have an air of good breeding, even in the case of a blow. Dramatic art was modeled upon the usage of good society, and the diction and gestures of the actors were in harmony with the hoops and hair powder, which even then disfigured 'Phèdre.'[1] I have never appreciated the defects of this school of art. I bravely endured it twice in the week, for it was the fashion to like it; but I listened with so cold and constrained an air that it was generally said I was insensible to the charms of fine poetry.

"One evening, after a rather long absence from Paris, I went to the Comédie Française to see 'Le Cid.'[2] Lelio had been admitted to this theatre during my stay in the country, and I saw him for the first time. He played Rodrigue. I was deeply moved by the very first tone of his voice. It was penetrating rather than

[1] "Phedre," by Racine. [2] "Le Cid," by Corneille.

sonorous, but vibrating and strongly accentuated. His voice was much criticized. That of the Cid was supposed to be deep and powerful, just as all the heroes of antiquity were supposed to be tall and strong. A king who was but five feet six inches could not wear the diadem; it would have been contrary to the decrees of tastes. Lelio was small and slender. His beauty lay not in the features, but in the nobleness of his forehead, the irresistible grace of his attitude, the careless ease of his movements, the proud but melancholy expression of his face. The word charm should have been invented for him; it belonged to all his words, to all his glances, to all his motions. It was indeed a charm which he threw around me. This man, who stepped, spoke, moved without system or affectation, who sobbed with his heart as much as with his voice, who forgot himself to become identified with his passion; this man in whom the body seemed wasted and shattered by the soul, and a single one of whose glances contained all the life I failed to find in real life, exercised over me a really magnetic power. I alone could follow and understand him, and he was for five years my king, my life, my love. To me he was much more than a man. His was an intellectual power which formed my soul at its will. Soon I was unable to conceal the impression he made on me. I gave up my box at the Comédie Française in order not to betray myself. I pretended I had become pious, and in the evening I went to pray in the churches; instead of that I dressed myself as a working woman and mingled with the common people

that I might listen to him unconstrained. At last I bribed one of the employees of the theatre to let me occupy a little corner where no one could see me and which I reached by a side corridor. As an additional precaution I dressed myself as a schoolboy. When the hour for the theatre sounded in the large clock in my drawing-room I was seized with violent palpitations. While my carriage was getting ready I tried to control myself; and if Larrieux happened to be with me I was rude to him, and threatened to send him away. I must have had great dissimulation and great tact to have hidden all this for five years from Larrieux, the most jealous of men, and from all the malicious people about me.

"I must tell you that instead of struggling against this passion I yielded to it with eagerness, with delight. It was so pure! Why should I have blushed for it? It gave me new life; it initiated me into all the feelings I had wished to experience; it almost made me a woman. I was proud to feel myself thrill and tremble. The first time my dormant heart beat aloud was to me a triumph. I learned to pout, to love, to be faithful and capricious. It was remarked I grew handsomer every day, that my dark eyes softened, that my smile was more expressive, that what I said was truer and had more meaning than could have been expected.

"I have just told you that when I heard the clock strike I trembled with joy and impatience. Even now I seem to feel the delicious oppression which used to overwhelm me at the sound of that clock. Since

then, through the vicissitudes of fortune, I have come to find myself very happy in the possession of a few small rooms in the Marais. Well, of all my magnificent house, my aristocratic *faubourg,* and my past splendor I regret only that which could have recalled to me those days of love and dreams. I have saved from the general ruin a few pieces of furniture which I look upon with as much emotion as if the hour for the theatre were about to strike now, and my horses were pawing at the door. Oh! my child, never love as I loved; it is a storm which death alone can quell.

"Then I learned to take pleasure in being young, wealthy, and beautiful. Seated in my coach, my feet buried in furs, I could see myself reflected in the mirror in front of me. The dress of that time, which has since been so laughed at, was of extraordinary richness and splendor. When arranged with taste and modified in its exaggeration, it endowed a beautiful woman with dignity, with a softness, the grace of which the portraits of that time could give you no idea. A woman, clothed in its panoply of feathers, of silks, and flowers, was obliged to move slowly. I have seen very fair women in white robes with long trains of watered silk, their hair powdered and dressed with white plumes, who might without exaggeration have been compared to swans. Despite all Rousseau has said, those enormous folds of satin, that profusion of muslin which enveloped a slender little body as down envelops a dove, made us resemble birds, rather than wasps. Long wings of lace fell from our arms, and our ribbons, purses, and jewels were variegated

with the most brilliant colors. Balancing ourselves in our little high-heeled shoes, we seemed to fear to touch the earth and walked with the disdainful circumspection of a little bird on the edge of a brook.

"At the time of which I am speaking blond powder began to be worn and gave the hair a light and soft color. This method of modifying the crude shades of the hair gave softness to the face, and an extraordinary brilliance to the eyes. The forehead was completely uncovered, its outline melted insensibly into the pale shades of the hair. It thus appeared higher and prouder, and gave all women a majestic air. It was the fashion, too, to dress the hair low, with large curls thrown back and falling on the neck. This was very becoming to me, and I was celebrated for the taste and magnificence of my dress. I sometimes wore red velvet with grebe-skin, sometimes white satin edged with tiger-skin, sometimes lilac damask shot with silver, with white feathers and pearls in my hair. Thus attired I would pay a few visits until the hour for the second piece at the theatre, for Lelio never came on in the first. I created a sensation wherever I appeared, and, when I again found myself in my carriage, I contemplated with much pleasure the reflected image of the woman who loved Lelio, and might have been loved by him. Until then, the only pleasure I had found in being beautiful lay in the jealousy I excited. But from the moment that I loved I began to enjoy my beauty for its own sake. It was all I had to offer Lelio as a compensation for the triumphs which were denied him in Paris, and I loved to

think of the pride and joy this poor actor, so misjudged, so laughed at, would feel were he told that the Marquise de R—— had dedicated her heart to him. These the dreams, however, were as brief as they were beautiful. As soon as my thoughts assumed some consistency, as soon as they took the form of any plan whatever, I had the fortitude to surpress them, and all the pride of rank reasserted its empire over my soul. You seem surprised at this. I will explain it by and by.

"About eight o'clock my carriage stopped at the little Church of the Carmelites near the Luxembourg, and I sent it away, for I was supposed to be attending the religious lectures which were given there at that hour. But I only crossed the church and the garden and came out on the other street. I went to the garret of the young needlewoman named Florence, who was devoted to me. I locked myself up in her room, and joyfully laid aside all my adornments to don the black square-cut coat, the sword and wig of a young college professor. Tall, with my dark complexion and inoffensive glances, I really had the awkward hypocritical look of a little priestling who had stolen in to see the play. I took a hackney coach, and hastened to hide myself in my little box at the theatre. Then my joy, my terror, my trembling ceased. A profound calm came upon me and I remained until the raising of the curtain as if absorbed in expectation of some great solemnity.

"As the vulture in his hypnotic circling surrounds the partridge and holds him panting and motionless,

so did the soul of Lelio, that great soul of a poet and tragedian, envelop all my faculties, and plunge me into a torpor of admiration. I listened, my hands clasped upon my knees and my chin upon the front of the box, and my forehead bathed in perspiration; I hardly breathed; the crude light of the lamps tortured my eyes, which, tired and burning, were fastened on his every gesture, his every step. His feigned motions, his simulated misfortune, impressed me as if they were real. I could hardly distinguish between truth and illusion. To me, Lelio was indeed Rodrigue, Bajazet, Hippolyte. I hated his enemies. I trembled at his dangers; his sorrows drew from me floods of tears, and when he died I was compelled to stifle my emotions in my handkerchief.

"Between the acts I sat down at the back of my box; I was as one dead until the meagre tone of the orchestra warned me that the curtain was about to rise again. Then I sprang up, full of strength and ardor, the power to feel, to weep. How much freshness, poetry, and youth there was in that man's talent! That whole generation must have been of ice not to have fallen at his feet.

"And yet, although he offended every conventional idea, although he could not adapt his taste to that silly public, although he scandalized the women by the carelessness of his dress and deportment, and displeased the men by his contempt for their foolish actions, there were moments when, by an irresistible fascination, by the power of his eye and his voice, he held the whole of this ungrateful public as if in the

hollow of his hand, and compelled it to applaud and tremble. This happened but seldom, for the entire spirit of the age can not be suddenly changed; but when it did happen, the applause was frantic. It seemed as if the Parisians, subjugated by his genius, wished to atone for all their injustice. As for me, I believed that this man had at most a supernatural power, and that those who most bitterly despised him were compelled to swell his triumph in spite of themselves. In truth, at such times the Comédie Française seemed smitten with madness, and the spectators, on leaving the theatre, were amazed to remember that they had applauded Lelio. As for me, I seized the opportunity to give full play to my emotion; I shouted, I wept, I passionately called his name. Happily for me, my weak voice was drowned in the storm which raged about me.

"At other times he was hissed when he seemed to me to be sublime, and then I left the theatre, my heart full of rage. Those nights were the most dangerous for me. I was violently tempted to seek him out, to weep with him, to curse the age in which we lived, and to console him by offering him my enthusiasm and love.

"One evening as I left the theatre by the side passage which led to my box, a small, slender man passed in front of me, and turned into the street. One of the stage-carpenters took off his hat and said: 'Good evening, Monsieur Lelio.' Eager to obtain a nearer view of this extraordinary man, I ran after him, crossed the street, and, forgetting the danger to which I exposed

myself, followed him into a café. Fortunately, it was not one in which I was likely to meet any one of my own rank.

"When, by the light of the smoky lamp, I looked at Lelio, I thought I had been mistaken and had followed another man. He was at least thirty-five, sallow, withered, and worn out. He was badly dressed, he looked vulgar, spoke in a hoarse, broken voice, shook hands with the meanest wretches, drank brandy, and swore horribly. It was not until I had heard his name repeated several times that I felt sure that this was the divinity of the theatre, interpreter of the great Corneille. I could recognize none of those charms which had so fascinated me, not even his glance, so bright, so ardent, and so sad. His eyes were dull, dead, almost stupid; his strongly accentuated pronunciation seemed ignoble when he called to the waiter, or talked of gambling and taverns. He walked badly, he looked vulgar, and the paint was only half wiped from his cheeks. It was no longer Hippolyte—it was Lelio. The temple was empty; the oracle was dumb; the divinity had become a man, not even a man —an actor.

"He went out, and I sat stupefied without even presence of mind enough to drink the hot spiced wine I had called for. When I remembered where I was, and perceived the insulting glances which were heaped upon me, I became frightened. It was the first time I had ever found myself in such an equivocal position, and in such immediate contact with people of that class.

"I rose and tried to escape, but forgot to pay my reckoning. The waiter ran after me; I was terribly ashamed; I was obliged to return, enter into explanations at the desk, and endure all the mocking and suspicious looks which were turned upon me. When I left I thought I was followed. In vain I looked for a hackney-coach; there were none remaining in front of the theatre. I constantly heard heavy steps echoing my own. Trembling, I turned my head, and recognized a tall, ill-looking fellow whom I had noticed in one corner of the café, and who had very much the air of a spy or something worse. He spoke to me; I do not know what he said; I was too much frightened to hear, but I had still presence of mind enough to rid myself of him. I struck him in the face with my cane, and, leaving him stunned at my audacity, I shot away swift as an arrow, and did not stop till I reached Florence's little garret. When I awoke the next morning in my own bed with its wadded curtains and coronal of pink feathers, I almost thought I had dreamed, and felt greatly mortified when I recollected the disillusions of the previous night. I thought myself thoroughly cured of my love, and I tried to rejoice at it, but in vain. I was filled with a mortal regret, the weariness of life again entered my heart, the world had not a pleasure which could charm me.

"Evening came, but brought no more beneficial emotions. Society seemed to me stupid. I went to church and listened to the evening lecture with a determination of becoming pious; I caught cold, and came home quite ill. I remained in bed several days. The Com-

tesse de Ferrières came to see me, assured me that I had no fever, that lying still made me ill, that I must amuse myself, go out, go to the theatre. She compelled me to go with her to see 'Cinna.'[1] 'You no longer go to the theatre,' said she to me; 'your health is undermined by your piety, and the dulness of your life. You have not seen Lelio for some time; he has improved, and he is now sometimes applauded. I think he may some day become very tolerable.'

"I do not know why I allowed myself to be persuaded. However, as I was completely disenchanted with Lelio, I thought I no longer ran any risk in braving his fascinations in public. I dressed myself with excessive brilliance, and, in a court proscenium box, fronted a danger in which I no longer believed.

"But the danger was never more imminent. Lelio was sublime, and I had never been more in love with him. My recent adventure seemed but a dream. I could not believe that Lelio was other than he seemed upon the stage. In spite of myself, I yielded to the terrible agitations into which he had the power of throwing me. My face was bathed in tears, and I was compelled to cover it with my handkerchief. In the disorder of my mind I wiped off my rouge and my patches, and the Comtesse de Ferrières advised me to retire to the back of my box, for my emotion was creating a sensation in the house. I fortunately had had the skill to make every one believe it was the playing of Mdlle. Hippolyte Clairon which affected me so deeply. She was, in my own opinion, a very cold and

[1] "Cinna," a tragedy by Corneille.

formal actress, too superior perhaps for her profession, as it was then understood; but her manner of saying 'Tout beau,' in 'Cinna,' had given her a great reputation. It must be said, however, that when she played with Lelio she outdid herself. Although she took pains to proclaim her share in the fashionable contempt for his method of acting, she assuredly felt the influence of his genius.

"That evening Lelio noticed me, either on account of my dress or my emotion; for I saw him, when he was not acting, bend over one of the spectators, who, at that epoch, sat upon the stage, and inquire my name. I guessed his question by the way both looked at me. My heart beat almost to suffocation, and I noticed during the play that Lelio's eyes turned several times toward me. What would I not have given to hear what the Chevalier de Bretillac, whom he had questioned, had said to him about me! Lelio's face did not indicate the nature of the information he had received, for he was obliged to retain the expression suited to his part. I knew this Bretillac very slightly, and I could not imagine whether he would speak well or ill of me.

"That night I understood for the first time the nature of the passion which enchained me to Lelio. It was a passion purely intellectual, purely ideal. It was not he I loved, but those heroes of ancient times whose sincerity, whose fidelity, whose tenderness he knew how to portray; with him and by him I was carried back to an epoch of forgotten virtues. I was bright enough to think that in those days I should not

have been misjudged and hated, and that I should not have been reduced to loving a fantom of the footlights. Lelio was to me but the shadow of the Cid, the representative of that antique chivalric love now ridiculed in France. My Lelio was a fictitious being who had no existence outside the theatre. The illusions of the stage, the glare of the footlights, were a part of the being whom I loved. Without them he was nothing to me, and faded like a story before the brightness of day. I had no desire to see him off the boards; and should have been in despair had I met him. It would have been like contemplating the ashes of a great man.

"One evening as I was going to the Carmelite church with the intention of leaving it by the passage door, I perceived that I was followed, and became convinced that henceforth it would be almost impossible to conceal the object of my nocturnal expeditions. I decided to go publicly to the theatre. Lelio saw me and watched me; my beauty had struck him, my sensibility flattered him. His attention sometimes wandered so much as to displease the public. Soon I could no longer doubt. He was madly in love with me.

"My box had pleased the Princess de Vaudemont. I gave it up to her, and took for myself a smaller one, less in view of the house and better situated. I was almost upon the stage, I did not lose one of Lelio's glances; and he could look at me without its being seen by the public. But I no longer needed to catch his eye in order to understand all his feelings. The

sound of his voice, his sighs, the expression which he gave to certain verses, certain words, told me that he was speaking to me. I was the happiest and proudest of women, for then it was the hero, not the actor, who loved me.

"I have since heard that Lelio often followed me in my walks and drives; so little did I desire to see him outside of the theatre that I never perceived it. Of the eighty years I have passed in this world, those five are the only ones in which I really lived.

"One day I read in the 'Mercure de France' the name of a new actor engaged at the Comédie Française to replace Lelio, who was about to leave France.

"This announcement was a mortal blow to me. I could not conceive how I should exist when deprived of these emotions, this life of passion and storm. This event gave an immense development to my love, and was well-nigh my ruin.

"I no longer struggled with myself; I no longer sought to stifle all thoughts contrary to the dignity of my rank. I regretted that he was not what he appeared on the stage; I wished him as young and handsome as he seemed each night before the footlights, that I might sacrifice to him all my pride, all my prejudices.

"While I was in this state of irresolution, I received a letter in an unknown hand. It is the only love letter I have ever kept. Though Larrieux has written me innumerable protestations, and I have received a thousand perfumed declarations from a hun-

dred others, it is the only real love letter that was ever sent me."

The Marquise rose, opened with a steady hand an inlaid casket, and took from it a crumpled, worn-out letter, which I read with difficulty.

"MADAME—I am certain you will feel nothing but contempt for this letter, you will not even deem it worthy of your anger. But, to a man falling into an abyss, what matters one more stone at the bottom? You will think me mad, and you will be right. You will perhaps pity me, for you will not doubt my sincerity. However humble your piety may have made you, you will understand the extent of my despair; you must already know *how much evil and how much good your eyes can do.* . . .

"You must know this already, madame; it is impossible that the violent emotions I have portrayed upon the stage, my cries of wrath and despair, have not twenty times revealed to you my passion. You can not have lighted all these flames without being conscious of what you did. Perhaps you played with me as a tiger with his prey; perhaps the spectacle of my folly and my tortures was your pastime. But no; to think so were to presume too much. No, madame, I do not believe it; you never thought of me. You felt the verses of the great Corneille, you identified these with the noble passions of tragedy; that was all. And I, madman that I was, I dared to think that my voice alone sometimes awoke your sympathies, that my heart echoed in yours, that between you and me

there was something more than between me and the public. Oh, my madness was arrant, but it was sweet! Leave me my illusions, madame; what are they to you? Do you fear that I should boast of them? By what right should I do so, and who would believe me? I should only make myself a laughing-stock of sensible people. Leave me this conviction; it has given me more joy than the severity of the public has caused me sorrow. Let me bless you, let me thank you upon my knees, for the sensibility which I have discovered in your soul, and which no one else has ever shown me; for the tears which I have seen you shed for my fictitious sorrows, and which have often raised my inspiration almost to delirium; for the timid glances which sought, at least it seemed so, to console me for the coldness of my audience. Oh, why were you born to pomp and splendor! Why am I an obscure and nameless artist! Why have I not riches and the favor of the public, that I might exchange them for a name, for one of those titles which I have hitherto disdained, and which, perhaps, would permit me to aspire as high as you are placed! Once I deemed the distinctions conferred upon talent superior to all others. To what purpose, thought I, is a man a Chevalier or a Marquis but to be the sillier, the vainer, and the more insolent? I hated the pride of men of rank, and thought that I should be sufficiently avenged for their disdain if my genius raised me above them. Dreams and delusions all! My strength has not equaled my mad ambition. I have remained obscure; I have done worse—I have touched success, and allowed it to escape me. I

thought myself great, and I was cast down to the dust; I imagined that I was almost sublime, and I was condemned to be ridiculous. Fate took me—me and my audacious dreams—and crushed me as if I had been a reed! I am a most wretched man! But I committed my greatest folly when I cast my eyes beyond that row of lights which marked between me and the rest of society an invisible line of separation. It is to me a circle of Popilius. I, an actor, I dared to raise my eyes and fasten them upon a beautiful woman—upon a woman, young, lovely, and of high rank; for you are all this, madame, and I know it. The world accuses you of coldness and of exaggerated piety. I alone understand you. Your first smile, your first tear, sufficiently disproved the absurd fable which Chevalier de Bretillac repeated against you.

"But then what a destiny is yours! What fatality weighs upon you as upon me, that in the midst of society so brilliant, which calls itself so enlightened, you should have found only the heart of a poor actor to do you justice. Nothing will deprive me of the sad and consoling thought that, had we been born in the same rank, you would have been mine in spite of my rivals, in spite of my inferiority. You would have been compelled to acknowledge that there is in me something greater than their wealth, and their titles—the power of loving you. LELIO."

"This letter," continued the Marquise, "was of a character very unusual at the time it was written, and seemed to me, notwithstanding some passages of the-

atrical declamation at the beginning, so powerful, so true, so full of only bold passion, that I was overwhelmed by it. The pride which still struggled within me faded away. I would have given all the remaining days I had to live one hour of such love.

"I answered in these words, as nearly as I can remember:

" 'I do not accuse you, Lelio; I accuse destiny. I do not pity you alone; I pity myself also. Neither pride nor prudence shall make me deny you the consolation of believing that I have felt a preference for you. Keep it, for it is the only one I can offer you. I can never consent to see you.'

"Next day I received a note which I hastily read and threw into the fire, to prevent Larrieux from seeing it, for he came suddenly upon me while I was reading it. It read thus:

" 'MADAME—I must see you or I must die. Once—once only, but for a single hour, if such is your will. Why should you fear an interview since you trust my honor and my prudence. Madame, I know who you are; I am well aware of your piety and of the austerity of your life. I am not fool enough to hope for anything but a word of compassion, but it must fall from your own lips. My heart must receive it and bear it away, or my heart must break. LELIO.'

"I believed implicitly in the humility, in the sincerity of Lelio. Besides, I had ample reason to trust my own strength. I resolved to see him. I had completely for-

gotten his faded features, his low-bred manners, his vulgar aspect; I recollected only the fascination of his genius, his letters, and his love. I answered:

"'I will see you. Find some secure place, but hope for nothing but for what you have asked. Should you seek to abuse my trust, you would be a villain, and I should not fear you.'

"Answer:

"'Your trust would save you from the basest of villains. You will see, Madame, that Lelio is not unworthy of it. Duke —— has often been good enough to offer me the use of his house in the Rue de Valois. Deign to go thither after the play.'

"Some explanations and directions as to the locality of the house followed. I received this note at four o'clock. The whole negotiation had occupied but a day. I had spent it in wandering through the house like one distracted; I was in a fever. This rapid succession of events bore me along as in a dream.

"When I had made the final decision, when it was impossible to draw back, I sank down upon my ottoman, breathless and dizzy.

"I was really ill. A surgeon was sent for; I was bled. I told my servants not to mention my indisposition to any one; I dreaded the intrusion of officious advisers, and was determined not to be prevented from going out that night.

"I threw myself upon my bed to await the appointed hour, and gave orders that no visitors should be admitted. The blood-letting had relieved and weakened me; I sank into a great depression of spirits. All my

illusions vanished with the excitement which had accompanied my fever. Reason and memory returned; I remembered my disenchantment in the coffee-house, and Lelio's wretched appearance there; I prepared to blush for my folly, and to fall from the height of my deceitful visions to a bare and despicable reality. I no longer understood how it had been possible for me to consent to exchange my heroic and romantic tenderness for the revulsion of feeling which awaited me, and the sense of shame which would henceforth poison all my recollections. I bitterly regretted what I had done; I wept my illusions, my love, and that future of pure and secret joys which I was about to forfeit. Above all, I mourned for Lelio, whom in seeing I should forever lose, in whose love I had found five years of happiness, and for whom in a few hours I should feel nothing but indifference.

"In the paroxysm of my grief I violently wrung my arms; the vein reopened, and I had barely time to ring for my maid, who found me in a swoon in my bed. A deep and heavy sleep, against which I struggled in vain, seized me. I neither dreamed nor suffered; I was as one dead for several hours. When I again opened my eyes my room was almost dark, my house silent; my waiting-woman was asleep in a chair at the foot of my bed. I remained for some time in such a state of numbness and weakness that I recollected nothing. Suddenly my memory returned, and I asked myself whether the hour and the day of rendezvous were passed, whether I had slept an hour or a century; whether I had killed Lelio by breaking my

word. Was there yet time? I tried to rise, but my strength failed me. I struggled for some moments as if in a nightmare. At last I summoned all the forces of my will. I sprang to the floor, opened the curtains, and saw the moon shining upon the trees of my garden. I ran to the clock; the hands marked ten. I seized my maid and waked her: 'Quinette, what day of the week is it?' She sprang from her chair, screaming, and tried to escape from me, for she thought me delirious; I reassured her and learned that I had only slept three hours. I thanked God. I asked for a hackney-coach. Quinette looked at me in amazement. At last she became convinced that I had the full use of my senses, transmitted my order, and began to dress me.

"I asked for my simplest dress; I put no ornaments in my hair, I refused to wear my rouge. I wished above all things for Lelio's esteem and respect, for they were far more precious to me than his love. Nevertheless, I was pleased when Quinette, who was much surprised at this new caprice, said, examining me from head to foot: 'Truly, madame, I know not how you manage it. You are dressed in a plain white robe, without either train or pannier; you are ill and as pale as death; you have not even put on a patch; yet I never saw you so beautiful as to-night. I pity the men who will look upon you!' 'Do you think me so very austere, my poor Quinette?' 'Alas, madame, every day I pray Heaven to make me like you; but up to this time—' 'Come, simpleton, give me my mantle and muff.'

"At midnight I was in the house of the Rue de Valois. I was carefully veiled, a sort of valet de chambre received me; he was the only human being to be seen in this mysterious dwelling. He led me through the windings of a dark garden to a pavilion buried in silence and shadow. Depositing his green silk lantern in the vestibule, he opened the door of a large dusky room, showed me by a respectful gesture and with a most impassive face a ray of light proceeding from the other extremity, and said, in a tone so low that it seemed as if he feared to awaken the sleeping echoes: 'Your ladyship is alone, no one else has yet come. Your ladyship will find in the summer parlor a bell which I will answer if you need anything.' He disappeared as if by enchantment, shutting the door upon me.

"I was terribly frightened; I thought I had fallen into some trap. I called him back. He instantly reappeared, and his air of stupid solemnity reassured me. I asked him what time it was, although I knew perfectly well, for I had sounded my watch twenty times in the carriage. 'It is midnight,' answered he, without raising his eyes. I now resolutely entered the summer parlor, and I realized how unfounded were my fears when I saw that the doors which opened upon the garden were only of painted silk. Nothing could be more charming than this boudoir; it was fitted up as a concert-room. The walls were of stucco as white as snow, and the mirrors were framed in unpolished silver. Musical instruments of unusually rich material were scattered about, upon seats of white vel-

vet, trimmed with pearls. The light came from above through leaves of alabaster, which formed a dome. This soft, even light might have been mistaken for that of the moon. A single statue of white marble stood in the middle of the room; it was an antique and represented Isis veiled, with her finger upon her lips. The mirrors which reflected us, both pale and draped in white, produced such an illusion upon me that I was obliged to distinguish my finger from hers.

"Suddenly the silence was interrupted; the door was opened and closed, and light footsteps sounded upon the floor. I sank into a chair more dead than alive, for I was about to see Lelio shorn of the illusions of the stage. I closed my eyes, and inwardly bade them farewell before I reopened them.

"But how much was I surprised! Lelio was beautiful as an angel. He had not taken off his stage dress, and it was the most elegant I had ever seen him wear. His Spanish doublet was of white satin, his shoulder and garter knots of cherry ribbons, and a short cloak of the same color was thrown over his shoulder. He wore an immense ruff of English lace; his hair was short and unpowdered, partially covered by a cap with white feathers and a diamond rose. In this costume he had just played Don Juan in 'Festin de Pierre.' Never had I seen him so beautiful, so young, so poetical, as at that moment. Velasquez would have worshiped such a model.

"He knelt before me. I could not help stretching out my hand to him, he seemed so submissive, so fearful of displeasing me. A man sufficiently in love to

tremble before a woman was rare in those times, and this one was thirty-five and an actor.

"It seemed to me then, it seems to me still, that he was in the first bloom of youth. In his white dress he looked like a young page; his forehead had all the purity, his heart all the ardor of a first love. He took my hands and covered them with kisses. My senses seemed to desert me; I caressed his burning forehead, his stiff, black hair, and the brown neck which disappeared in the soft whiteness of his collar. He wept like a woman; I was overwhelmed with surprise.

"I wept delicious tears. I compelled him to raise his head and look at me. How splendid, how tender were his eyes! How much fascination his warm, true soul communicated to the very defects of his face, and the scars left upon it by time and toil! When I saw the premature wrinkles upon his beautiful forehead, when I saw the pallor of his lips, the languor of his smile, my heart was melted. I felt that I must needs weep for his griefs, his disappointments, the labors of his life. I identified myself with him in all his sorrows, even that of his long, hopeless love for me, and I had but one wish—to compensate him for the ills he had suffered.

"My dear Lelio, my great Rodrigue, my beautiful Don Juan! He spoke to me, he told me how from a dissipated actor I had made him a man full of life and ardor; how I had raised him in his own eyes, and restored to him the illusions of his youth; he spoke of his respect, his veneration for me, of his contempt for the species of love which was then in fashion. Never

did a man with more penetrating eloquence speak to the heart of a woman; never did Racine make love utter itself with such conviction of its own truth, such poetry, such strength. Everything elevated and profound, everything sweet and fiery which passion can inspire, lay in his words, his face, his eyes, his caresses. Alas! did he deceive himself! Was he playing a part?"

"I certainly do not think so," I cried, looking at the Marquise. She seemed to grow young as she spoke; and, like the fairy Urgela, to cast off her hundred years. I know not who has said that a woman's heart has no wrinkles.

"Listen to the end," said she. "I threw my arms around his neck; I shivered as I touched the satin of his coat, as I breathed the perfume of his hair. My emotion was too violent and I fainted.

"He recalled me to myself by his prompt assistance. I found him still kneeling at my feet. 'Pity me, kill me,' cried he. He was paler and far more ill than I.

" 'Listen, Lelio,' said I. 'Here we separate forever, but let us carry from this place a whole future of blissful thoughts and adored memories. I swear, Lelio, to love you till my death. I swear it without fear, for I feel that the snows of age will not have the power to extinguish this ardent flame.' Lelio knelt before me; he did not implore me, he did not reproach me; he said that he had not hoped for so much happiness as I had given him, and that he had no right to ask for more. Nevertheless, as he bade

me farewell, his despair, the emotion which trembled in his face, terrified me. I asked him if he would not find happiness in thinking of me, if the ecstasy of our meeting would not lend its charm to all the days of his life, if his past and future sorrows would not be softened each time he recalled it. He roused himself to promise, to swear all I asked. He again fell at my feet and passionately kissed my dress. I made a sign and he left me. The carriage I had sent for came.

"The automatic servant of the house knocked three times outside to warn me. Lelio despairingly threw himself in front of the door: he looked like a spectre. I gently repulsed him and he yielded. I crossed the threshold, and as he attempted to follow me, I showed him a chair in the middle of the room, underneath the statue of Isis. He sat down in it. A passionate smile wandered over his lips, his eyes sent out one more flash of gratitude and love. He was still beautiful, still young, still a grandee of Spain. After a few steps, when I was about to lose him forever, I turned back and looked at him once more. Despair had crushed him. He was old, altered, frightful. His body seemed paralyzed. His stiffened lips attempted an unmeaning smile. His eyes were glassy and dim; he was now only Lelio, the shadow of a lover and a prince."

The Marquise paused; then, while her aspect changed like that of a ruin which totters and sinks, she added: "Since then I have not heard him mentioned."

The Marquise made a second and a longer pause; then, with the terrible fortitude which comes with length of years, which springs from the persistent love of life or the near hope of death, she said with a smile: "Well, do you not now believe in the ideality of the eighteenth century?"

THE BEAUTY-SPOT

BY ALFRED LOUIS CHARLES DE MUSSET

Alfred de Musset, the great poet of love, the most spontaneous, sincere, moving, spiritual, ironic, lucid, impertinent, disdainful of rime, was born at Paris in 1810. He was a dandy, the spoiled child of the Romantic movement, with a voluptuous and sombre imagination. But he made a too great sacrifice to fashion and so-called Byronism when he wrote "Rolla." The crisis of his life came when, with a broken heart, he returned to Paris in 1833, leaving George Sand at Venice. Not until then did he produce his poetical masterpieces, "La Nuit de Mai," etc., and his prose romance, "The Confession of a Child of the Age," and those exquisite little theatrical pieces not intended for the theatre, such as "The Chandelier," etc.

Later, in his "Letters of Dupin and Cotinet," which he wrote for the "Revue des Deux Mondes," De Musset broke with Romanticism. He died at Paris in 1857.

THE BEAUTY-SPOT

BY ALFRED DE MUSSET

I

IN 1756, when Louis XV, wearied with the quarrels between the magistrature and the grand council, about the "two sous tax," [1] determined upon holding a special *lit de justice*, the members of Parliament resigned. Sixteen of these resignations were accepted, and as many exiles decreed. "But," said Madame de Pompadour to one of the presidents, "could you calmly stand by and see a handful of men resist the authority of the King of France? Would you not have a very bad opinion of such a policy? Throw off the cloak of petty pretense, M. le President, and you will see the situation just as I see it myself."

It was not only the exiles that had to pay the penalty of their want of compliance, but also their relatives and friends. The violation of mail-secrets was one of the King's amusements. To relieve the monotony of his other pleasures, it pleased him to hear his favorite read all the curious things that were to be found in his subjects' private correspondence. Of course, under the fallacious pretext of doing his own detective work, he reaped a large harvest of enjoy-

[1] Two sous per livre from the tenth of the revenue.

ment from the thousand little intrigues which thus passed under his eyes; but whoever was connected, whether closely or in a remote degree, with the leaders of the factions, was almost invariably ruined.

Every one knows that Louis XV, with all his manifold weaknesses, had one, and only one, strong point: he was inexorable.

One evening, as he sat before the fire with his feet on the mantelpiece, melancholy as was his wont, the marquise, looking through a packet of letters, suddenly burst into a laugh and shrugged her shoulders. The King wished to know what was the matter.

"Why, I have found here," answered she, "a letter, without a grain of common sense in it, but a very touching thing for all that—quite pitiable in fact."

"Whose is the signature?" said the King.

"There is none, it is a love-letter."

"And what is the address?"

"That is just the point. It is addressed to Mademoiselle d'Annebault, the niece of my good friend, Madame d'Estrades. Apparently it has been put in among these papers on purpose for me to see."

"And what is there in it?" the King persisted.

"Why, I tell you it is all about love. There is mention also of Vauvert and of Neauflette. Are there any gentlemen in those parts? Does your Majesty know of any?"

The King always prided himself upon knowing France by heart, that is, the nobility of France. The etiquette of his court, which he had studied thor-

oughly, was not more familiar to him than the armorial bearings of his realm. Not a very wide range of learning; still nothing beyond it did he reckon worthy the study; and it was a point of vanity with him, the social hierarchy being, in his eyes, something like the marble staircase of his palace; he must set foot on it as sole lord and master. After having pondered a few moments, he knitted his brow, as though struck by an unwelcome remembrance; then, with a sign to the marquise to read, he threw himself back in his easy chair, saying with a smile:

"Read on—she is a pretty girl."

Madame de Pompadour assumed her sweetest tone of raillery and began to read a long letter, which, from beginning to end, was one rhapsody of love.

"Just see," said the writer, "how the fates persecute me! At first everything seemed to work for the fulfilment of my wishes, and you yourself, my sweet one, had you not given me reason to hope for happiness? I must, however, renounce this heavenly dream, and that for no fault of mine. Is it not an excess of cruelty to have let me catch a glimpse of paradise, only to dash me into the abyss? When some unfortunate wretch is doomed to death, do they take a barbarous pleasure in placing before his eyes all that would make him love life and regret leaving it? Such is, however, my fate: I have no other refuge, no other hope, than the tomb, for, in my dire misfortune, I can no longer dream of winning your hand. When fate smiled on me, all my hopes were that you should be mine; today, a poor man, I should abhor myself if I dared still

to think of such blessedness, and, now that I can no longer make you happy, though dying of love for you, I forbid you to love me—"

The Marquise smiled at these last words.

"Madame," said the King, "this is an honorable man. But what prevents him from marrying his lady-love?"

"Permit me, sire, to continue."

"—This overwhelming injustice from the best of kings surprises me. You know that my father asked for me a commission as cornet or ensign in the Guards, and that on this appointment depended the happiness of my life, since it would give me the right to offer myself to you. The Duc de Biron proposed my name; but the King rejected me in a manner the memory of which is very bitter to me. If my father has his own way of looking at things (admitting that it is a wrong one) must I suffer for it? My devotion to the King is as true, as unbounded, as my love for you. How gladly would I give proof of both these sentiments, could I but draw the sword! Assuredly I feel deeply distressed at my request being refused; but that I should be thus disgraced without good reason is a thing opposed to the well-known kindness of his Majesty."

"Aha!" said the King, "I am becoming interested."

"—If you knew how very dull we are! Ah! my friend! This estate of Neauflette, this country-house of Vauvert, these wooded glades!—I wander about them all day long. I have forbidden a rake to be used; the sacrilegious gardener came yesterday with

his iron-shod besom. He was about to touch the sand. But the trace of your steps, lighter than the wind, was not effaced. The prints of your little feet and of your red satin heels were still upon the path; they seemed to walk before me, as I followed your beautiful image, and that charming fantom took shape at times as though it were treading in the fugitive prints. It was there, while conversing with you by the flower-beds, that it was granted me to know you, to appreciate you. A brilliant education joined to the spirit of an angel, the dignity of a queen with the grace of a nymph, thoughts worthy of Leibnitz expressed in language so simple, Plato's bee on the lips of Diana, all this enfolded me as in a veil of adoration. And, during those delicious moments, the darling flowers were blooming about us, I inhaled their breath while listening to you, in their perfume your memory lived. They droop their heads now; they present to me the semblance of death!"

"This is all Rousseau and water," said the King. "Why do you read such stuff to me?"

"Because your Majesty commanded me to do so, for the sake of Mademoiselle d'Annebault's beautiful eyes."

"It is true, she has beautiful eyes."

"—And when I return from these walks, I find my father alone, in the great drawing-room, near the lighted candle, leaning on his elbow, amid the faded gildings which cover our moldy wainscot. It is with pain that he sees me enter. My grief disturbs his. Athénaïs! At the back of that drawing-room, near

the window, is the harpsichord over which flitted those sweet fingers that my lips have touched but once —once, while yours opened softly to harmonies of celestial music—opened with such dainty art that your songs were but a smile. How happy are they—Rameau, Lulli, Duni, and so many more! Yes, yes, you love them—they are in your memory—their breath has passed through your lips. I too seat myself at that harpsichord, I strive to play one of those airs that you love;—how cold, how monotonous they seem to me! I leave them and listen to their dying accents while the echo loses itself beneath that lugubrious vault. My father turns to me and sees me distressed—what can he do? Some boudoir gossip, some report from the servants' hall has closed upon us the gates that lead into the world. He sees me young, ardent, full of life, asking only to live in this world, he is my father, and can do nothing for me."

"One would think," said the King, "that this fellow was starting for the hunt, and that his falcon had been killed on his wrist. Against whom is he inveighing, may I ask?"

"—It is quite true," continued the Marquise, reading in a lower tone. "It is quite true that we are near neighbors, and distant relatives, of the Abbé Chauvelin. . . ."

"That is what it is, is it?" said Louis XV, yawning. "Another nephew of the *enquêtes et requêtes*. My Parliament abuses my bounty; it really has too large a family."

"But if it is only a *distant* relative!"

"Enough; all these people are good for nothing. This Abbé Chauvelin is a Jansenist; not a bad sort of fellow, in his way; but he has dared to resign. Please throw the letter into the fire, and let me hear no more about it."

II

If these last words of the King were not exactly a death-warrant, they were something like a refusal of permission to live. What could a young man without fortune do, in 1756, whose King would not hear his name mentioned? He might have looked for a clerkship, or tried to turn philosopher, or poet, perhaps; but without official dedication, the trade was worth nothing.

And besides, such was not, by any means, the vocation of the Chevalier Vauvert, who had written, with tears, the letter which made the King laugh. At this very moment, alone with his father, in the old château of Neauflette, his look was desperate and gloomy, even to frenzy, as he paced to and fro.

"I must go to Versailles," he said.

"And what will you do there?"

"I know not; but what am I doing here?"

"You keep me company. It certainly can not be very amusing for you, and I will not in any way seek to detain you. But do you forget that your mother is dead?"

"No, sir. I promised her to consecrate to you the life that you gave me. I will come back, but I must go. I really can not stay in this place any longer."

"And why, if I may ask?"

"My desperate love is the only reason. I love Mademoiselle d'Annebault madly."

"But you know that it is useless. It is only Molière who contrives successful matches without dowries. Do you forget too the disfavor with which I am regarded?"

"Ah! sir, that disfavor! Might I be allowed, without deviating from the profound respect I owe you, to ask what caused it? We do not belong to the Parliament. We pay the tax; we do not order it. If the Parliament stints the King's purse, it is his affair, not ours. Why should M. l'Abbé Chauvelin drag us into his ruin?"

"Monsieur l'Abbé Chauvelin acts as an honest man. He refuses to approve the 'dixième' tax because he is disgusted at the prodigality of the court. Nothing of this kind would have taken place in the days of Madame de Chateauroux! She was beautiful, at least, that woman, and did not cost us anything, not even what she so generously gave. She was sovereign mistress, and declared that she would be satisfied if the King did not send her to rot in some dungeon when he should be pleased to withdraw his good graces from her. But this Étioles, this le Normand, this insatiable Poisson!"

"What does it matter?"

"What does it matter! say you? More than you think. Do you know that now, at this very time, while the King is plundering us, the fortune of this grisette is incalculable? She began by contriving to get an

annuity of a hundred and eighty thousand livres—but that was a mere bagatelle, it counts for nothing now; you can form no idea of the startling sums that the King showers upon her; three months of the year can not pass without her picking up, as though by chance, some five or six hundred thousand livres—yesterday out of the salt-tax, to-day out of the increase in the appropriation for the Royal mews. Although she has her own quarters in the royal residences, she buys La Selle, Cressy, Aulnay, Brimborion, Marigny, Saint-Remy, Bellevue, and a number of other estates—mansions in Paris, in Fontainebleau, Versailles, Compiègne —without counting secret hoards in all the banks of Europe, to be used in case of her own disgrace or a demise of the crown. And who pays for all this, if you please?"

"That I do not know, sir, but, certainly, not I."

"It *is* you, as well as everybody else. It is France, it is the people who toil and moil, who riot in the streets, who insult the statue of Pigalle. But Parliament will endure it no longer, it will have no more new imposts. As long as there was question of defraying the cost of the war, our last crown was ready; we had no thought of bargaining. The victorious King could see clearly that he was beloved by the whole kingdom, still more so when he was at the point of death. Then all dissensions, all faction, all ill-feeling ceased. All France knelt before the sick-bed of the King, and prayed for him. But if we pay, without counting, for his soldiers and his doctors, we will no longer pay for his mistresses; we have other things

to do with our money than to support Madame de Pompadour."

"I do not defend her, sir. I could not pretend to say either that she was in the wrong or in the right. I have never seen her."

"Doubtless; and you would not be sorry to see her —is it not so?—in order to have an opinion on the subject? For, at your age, the head judges through the eyes. Try it then, if the fancy takes you. But the satisfaction will be denied you."

"Why, sir?"

"Because such an attempt is pure folly; because this marquise is as invisible in her little boudoir at Brimborion as the Grand Turk in his seraglio; because every door will be shut in your face. What are you going to do? Attempt an impossibility? Court fortune like an adventurer?"

"By no means, but like a lover. I do not intend to supplicate, sir, but to protest against an injustice. I had a well-founded hope, almost a promise, from M. de Biron; I was on the eve of possessing the object of my love, and this love is not unreasonable; you have not disapproved of it. Let me venture, then, to plead my own cause. Whether I shall appeal to the King or to Madame de Pompadour I know not, but I wish to set out."

"You do not know what the court is, and you wish to present yourself there."

"I may perhaps be the more easily received for the very reason that I am unknown there."

"You unknown, Chevalier! What are you thinking

about? With such a name as yours! We are gentlemen of an old stock, Monsieur; you could not be unknown."

"Well, then, the King will listen to me."

"He will not even hear you. You see Versailles in your dreams, and you will think yourself there when your postilion stops his horses at the city gates. Suppose you get as far as the antechamber—the gallery, the Oeil de Bœuf; perhaps there may be nothing between his Majesty and yourself but the thickness of a door; there will still be an abyss for you to cross. You will look about you, you will seek expedients, protection, and you will find nothing. We are relatives of M. de Chauvelin, and how do you think the King takes vengeance on such as we? The rack for Damiens, exile for the Parliament, but for us a word is enough, or, worse still—silence. Do you know what the silence of the King is, when, instead of replying to you, he mutely stares at you, as he passes, and annihilates you? After the Grève, and the Bastille, this is a degree of torture which, though less cruel in appearance, leaves its mark as plainly as the hand of the executioner. The condemned man, it is true, remains free, but he must no longer think of approaching woman or courtier, drawing-room, abbey, or barrack. As he moves about every door closes upon him, every one who is anybody turns away, and thus he walks this way and that, in an invisible prison."

"But I will so bestir myself in my prison that I shall get out of it."

"No more than any one else! The son of M. de Meynières was no more to blame than you. Like you, he had received promises, he entertained most legitimate hopes. His father, a devoted subject of his Majesty, an upright man if there is one in the kingdom, repulsed by his sovereign, bowed his gray head before the *grisette*, not in prayer, but in ardent pleading. Do you know what she replied? Here are her very words, which M. de Meynières sends me in a letter: 'The King is the master, he does not deem it appropriate to signify his displeasure to you personally; he is content to make you aware of it by depriving your son of a calling. To punish you otherwise would be to begin an unpleasantness, and he wishes for none; we must respect his will. I pity you, however; I realize your troubles. I have been a mother; I know what it must cost you to leave your son without a profession!' This is how the creature expresses herself; and you wish to put yourself at her feet!"

"They say they are charming, sir."

"Of course they say so. She is not pretty, and the King does not love her, as every one knows. He yields, he bends before this woman. She *must* have something else than that wooden head of hers to maintain her strange power."

"But they say she has so much wit."

"And no heart!—Much to her credit, no doubt."

"No heart! She who knows so well how to declaim the lines of Voltaire, how to sing the music of Rousseau! She who plays Alzire and Colette! No heart! Oh, that can not be! I will never believe it."

"Go then and see, since you wish it. I advise, I do not command, but you will only be at the expense of a useless journey.—You love this D'Annebault young lady very much then?"

"More than my life."

"*Alors,* be off!"

III

It has been said that journeys injure love, because they distract the mind; it has also been said that they strengthen love, because they give one time to dream over it. The chevalier was too young to make such nice distinctions. Weary of the carriage, when half-way on his journey, he had taken a saddle-hack and thus arrived toward five o'clock in the evening at the "Sun" Inn—a sign then out of fashion, since it dated back to the time of Louis XIV.

There was, at Versailles, an old priest who had been rector of a church near Neauflette; the chevalier knew him and loved him. This curé, poor and simple himself, had a nephew, who held a benefice, a court abbé, who might therefore be useful. So the chevalier went to this nephew who—man of importance as he was—his chin ensconced in his "rabat," received the newcomer civilly, and condescended to listen to his request.

"Come!" said he, "you arrive at a fortunate moment. This is to be an opera-night at the court, some sort of fête or other. I am not going, because I am sulking so as to get something out of the marquise; but here I happen to have a note from the Duc d'Au-

mont; I asked for it for some one else, but never mind, you can have it. Go to the fête; you have not yet been presented, it is true, but, for this entertainment, that is not necessary. Try to be in the King's way when he goes into the little *foyer*. One look, and your fortune is made."

The chevalier thanked the abbé, and, worn out by a disturbed night and a day on horse-back, he made his toilet at the inn in that negligent manner which so well becomes a lover. A maid-servant, whose experience had been decidedly limited, dressed his wig as best she could, covering his spangled coat with powder. Thus he turned his steps toward his luck with the hopeful courage of twenty summers.

The night was falling when he arrived at the château. He timidly advanced to the gate and asked his way of a sentry. He was shown the grand staircase. There he was informed by the tall Swiss that the opera had just commenced, and that the King, that is to say, everybody, was in the hall.[2]

"If Monsieur le Marquis will cross the court," added the doorkeeper (he conferred the title of "Marquis" at a venture), "he will be at the play in an instant. If he prefers to go through the apartments—"

The chevalier was not acquainted with the palace.

[2] This does not refer to the present theatre, built by Louis XV, or rather by Madame de Pompadour, but only completed in 1769 and inaugurated in 1770, for the marriage of the Duc de Berri (Louis XVI) with Marie Antoinette. The "hall" in question was a sort of portable theatre, that was moved into this or that gallery or apartment, after the manner in vogue in the days of Louis XIV.

Curiosity prompted him, at first, to reply that he would cross the apartments; then, as a lackey offered to follow as a guide, an impulse of vanity made him add that he needed no escort. He, therefore, went forward alone, but not without a certain emotion of timidity.

Versailles was resplendent with light. From the ground-floor to the roof there glittered and blazed lustres, chandeliers, gilded furniture, marbles. With the exception of the Queen's apartments, the doors were everywhere thrown open. As the chevalier walked on he was struck with an astonishment and an admiration better imagined than described, for the wonder of the spectacle that offered itself to his gaze was not only the beauty, the sparkle of the display itself, but the absolute solitude which surrounded him in this enchanted wilderness.

To find one's self alone in a vast enclosure, be it temple, cloister, or castle, produces a strange, even a weird feeling. The monument—whatever it be—seems to weigh upon the solitary individual; its walls gaze at him; its echoes are listening to him; the noise of his steps breaks in upon a silence so deep that he is impressed by an involuntary fear and dares not advance without a feeling akin to awe. Such were the chevalier's first impressions, but curiosity soon got the upper hand and drew him on. The candelabra of the Gallery of Mirrors, looking into the polished surfaces, saw their flames redoubled in them. Every one knows what countless thousands of cherubs, nymphs, and shepherdesses disport themselves on the panelings,

flutter about on the ceilings, and seem to encircle the entire palace as with an immense garland. Here, vast halls, with canopies of velvet shot with gold and chairs of state still impressed with the stiff majesty of the "great King"; there, creased and disordered ottomans, chairs in confusion around a card-table; a never-ending succession of empty salons, where all this magnificence shone out the more that it seemed entirely useless. At intervals were half-concealed doors opening upon corridors that extended as far as the eye could reach, a thousand staircases, a thousand passages crossing each other as in a labyrinth ; colonnades, raised platforms built for giants, boudoirs ensconced in corners like children's hiding-places, an enormous painting of Vanloo near a mantel of porphyry; a forgotten patch-box, lying beside a piece of grotesque Chinese workmanship; here a crushing grandeur, there an effeminate grace; and everywhere, in the midst of luxury, of prodigality, and of indolence, a thousand intoxicating odors, strange and diverse, mingle perfumes of flowers and women, an enervating warmth, the very material and sensible atmosphere of pleasure itself.

To be in such a place, amid such marvels, at twenty, and to be there alone, is surely quite sufficient cause for temporary intoxication. The chevalier advanced at haphazard, as in a dream.

"A very palace of fairies," he murmured, and, indeed, he seemed to behold, unfolding itself before him, one of those tales in which wandering knights discover enchanted castles. Were they indeed mortal

creatures that inhabited this matchless abode? Were they real women who came and sat on these chairs and whose graceful outlines had left on those cushions that slight impress, so suggestive, even yet, of indolence? Who knows but that, behind those thick curtains, at the end of some long dazzling gallery, there may perhaps soon appear a princess asleep for the last hundred years, a fairy in hoops, an Armida in spangles, or some court hamadryad that shall issue forth from this marble column, or burst from out of that gilded panel?

Bewildered, almost overpowered, at the sight of all these novel objects, the young chevalier, in order the better to indulge his reverie, had thrown himself on a sofa, and would doubtless have forgotten himself there for some time had he not remembered that he was in love. What, at this hour, was Mademoiselle d'Annebault, his beloved, doing—left behind in her old château?

"Athénaïs!" he exclaimed suddenly, "why do I thus waste my time here? Is my mind wandering? Great heavens! Where am I? And what is going on within me?"

He soon rose and continued his travels through this *terra incognita*, and of course lost his way. Two or three lackeys, speaking in a low voice, stood before him at the end of a gallery. He walked toward them and asked how he should find his way to the play.

"If M. le Marquis," he was answered (the same title being still benevolently granted him), "will give himself the trouble to go down that staircase and fol-

low the gallery on the right, he will find at the end of it three steps going up; he will then turn to the left, go through the Diana salon, that of Apollo, that of the Muses, and that of Spring; he will go down six steps more, then, leaving the Guards' Hall on his right and crossing over to the Ministers' staircase, he will not fail to meet there other ushers who will show him the way."

"Much obliged," said the chevalier, "with such excellent instruction, it will certainly be my fault if I do not find my way."

He set off again boldly, constantly stopping, however, in spite of himself, to look from side to side, then once more remembering his love. At last, at the end of a full quarter of an hour, he once more found, as he had been told, a group of lackeys.

"M. le Marquis is mistaken," they informed him; "it is through the other wing of the château that he should have gone, but nothing is easier for him than to retrace his steps. M. le Marquis has but to go down this staircase, then he will cross the salon of the Nymphs, that of Summer, that of—"

"I thank you,"said the chevalier, proceeding on his way. "How foolish I am," he thought, "to go on asking people in this fashion like a rustic. I am making myself ridiculous to no purpose, and even supposing—though it is not likely—that they are not laughing at me, of what use is their list of names, and the pompous sobriquets of these salons, not one of which I know?"

He made up his mind to go straight before him as

far as possible. "For," after all," said he to himself, "this palace is very beautiful and prodigiously vast, but it is not boundless, and, were it three times as large as our rabbit enclosure, I must at last reach the end of it."

But it is not easy in Versailles to walk on for a long time in one direction, and this rustic comparison of the royal dwelling to a rabbit enclosure doubtless displeased the nymphs of the place, for they at once set about leading the poor lover astray more than ever, and, doubtless, to punish him, took pleasure in making him retrace his steps over and over again, constantly bringing him back to the same place, like a countryman lost in a thicket of quickset; thus did they shut him in in this Cretan labyrinth of marble and gold.

In the "Antiquities of Rome," by Piranesi, there is a series of engravings which the artist calls "his dreams," and which are supposed to reproduce his own visions during a fit of delirious fever. These engravings represent vast Gothic halls; on the flagstones are strewn all sorts of engines and machines, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults, the expression of enormous power and formidable resistance. Along the walls you perceive a staircase, and upon this staircase, climbing, not without trouble, Piranesi himself. Follow the steps a little higher and they suddenly come to an end before an abyss. Whatever has happened to poor Piranesi, you think that he has, at any rate, reached the end of his labors, for he can not take another step without falling; but lift your

eyes and you will see a second staircase rising in the air, and upon these stairs Piranesi again, again on the brink of a precipice.

Look now still higher, and another staircase still rises before you, and again poor Piranesi continuing his ascent, and so on, until the everlasting staircase and the everlasting Piranesi disappear together in the skies; that is to say, in the border of the engraving.

This allegory, offspring of a nightmare, represents with a high degree of accuracy the tedium of useless labor and the species of vertigo which is brought on by impatience. The chevalier, wandering incessantly from salon to salon and from gallery to gallery, was at last seized with a fit of downright exasperation.

"Parbleu," said he, "but this is cruel! After having been so charmed, so enraptured, so enthralled, to find myself alone in this cursed palace." (It was no longer a palace of fairies!) "I shall never be able to get out of it! A plague upon the infatuation which inspired me with the idea of entering this place, like Prince Fortunatus with his boots of solid gold, instead of simply getting the first lackey I came across to take me to the play at once!"

The chevalier experienced this tardy feeling of repentance for his rashness at a moment when, like Piranesi, he was half-way up a staircase, on a landing between three doors. Behind the middle one, he thought he heard a murmur so sweet, so light, so voluptuous, that he could not help listening. At the very instant when he was tremblingly advancing with the indiscreet intention of eavesdropping, this door

swung open. A breath of air, balmy with a thousand perfumes, a torrent of light that rendered the very mirrors of the gallery lustreless struck him so suddenly that he perforce stepped back.

"Does Monsieur le Marquis wish to enter?" asked the usher who had opened the door.

"I wish to go to the play," replied the chevalier.

"It is just this moment over."

At the same time, a bevy of beautiful ladies, their complexions delicately tinted with white and carmine, escorted by lords, old and young, who led them, not by the arm, nor even by the hand, but by the tips of their fingers, began filing out from the Palace Theatre, taking great care to walk sidewise, in order not to disarrange their hoops.

All of these brilliant people spoke in a low voice, with an air half grave, half gay, a mixture of awe and respect.

"What can this be?" said the Chevalier, not guessing that chance had luckily brought him to the little *foyer*.

"The King is about to pass," replied the usher.

There is a kind of intrepidity, which hesitates at nothing; it comes but too easily, it is the courage of vulgar people. Our young provincial, although he was reasonably brave, did not possess this faculty. At the mere words, "The King is about to pass," he stood motionless and almost terror-stricken.

King Louis XV, who when out hunting would ride on horseback a dozen leagues with ease, was, in other respects, as is known, royally indolent. He

boasted, not without reason, that he was the first gentleman of France, and his mistresses used to tell him, not without truth, that he was the best built and the most handsome. It was something to remember to see him leave his chair, and deign to walk in person. When he crossed the *foyer*, with one arm laid, or rather stretched, on the shoulder of Monsieur d'Argenson, while his red heel glided over the polished floor (he had made his laziness the fashion), all whisperings ceased; the courtiers lowered their heads, not daring to bow outright, and the fine ladies, gently bending their knees within the depths of their immense furbelows, ventured that coquettish good-night which our grandmothers called a courtesy, and which our century has replaced by the brutal English shake of the hand.

But the King paid attention to nothing, and saw only what pleased him. Alfieri, perhaps, was there, and it is he who thus describes, in his memoirs, his presentation at Versailles:

"I well knew that the king never spoke to strangers who were not of striking appearance; all the same I could not brook the impassible and frowning demeanor of Louis XV. He scanned from head to foot the man who was being presented to him, and it looked as if he received no impression by so doing. It seems to me, however, that if one were to say to a giant, 'Here is an ant I present to you,' he would smile on looking at it, or perhaps say, 'Oh! what a little creature.'"

The taciturn monarch thus passed among these

flowers of feminine loveliness, and all this court, alone in spite of the crowd. It did not require of the chevalier much reflection to understand that he had nothing to hope from the King, and that the recital of his love would obtain no success in that quarter.

"Unfortunate that I am!" thought he. "My father was but too well informed when he told me that within two steps of the king I should see an abyss between him and me. Were I to venture to ask for an audience, who would be my patron? Who would present me? There he is—the absolute master, who can by a word change my destiny, assure my fortune, fulfil my desires. He is there before me; were I to stretch out my hand I could touch his embroidered coat—and I feel myself farther from him than if I were still buried in the depths of my native province! Oh! If I could only speak to him! Only approach him! Who will come to my help?"

While the chevalier was in this unhappy state of mind he saw entering with an air of the utmost grace and delicacy a young and attractive woman, clad very simply in a white gown, without diamonds or embroideries and with a single rose in her hair. She gave her hand to a lord *tout à l'ambre*, as Voltaire expresses it, and spoke softly to him behind her fan. Now chance willed it that, in chatting, laughing, and gesticulating, this fan should slip from her and fall beneath a chair, immediately in front of the chevalier. He at once hurried to pick it up, and as in doing so he had set one knee on the floor, the young lady appeared to him so charming that he presented her the

fan without rising. She stopped, smiled, and passed on, thanking him with a slight movement of the head, but at the look she had given the chevalier he felt his heart beat without knowing why. He was right. This young lady was *la petite d'Étioles,* as the malcontents still called her, while others in speaking of her said "la Marquise" in that reverent tone in which one says "The Queen."

IV

"She will protect me! She will come to my rescue! Ah! how truly the abbé spoke when he said that one look might decide my life. Yes, those eyes, so soft and gentle, that little mouth, both merry and sweet, that little foot almost hidden under the *pompon*— Yes, here is my good fairy!"

Thus thought the chevalier, almost aloud, as he returned to the inn. Whence came this sudden hope? Did his youth alone speak, or had the eyes of the marquise told a tale?

He passed the greater part of the night writing to Mademoiselle d'Annebault such a letter as we heard read by Madame de Pompadour to her lord.

To reproduce this letter would be a vain task. Excepting idiots, lovers alone find no monotony in repeating the same thing over and over again.

At daybreak the chevalier went out and began roaming about, carrying his dreams through the streets. It did not occur to him to have recourse once more to the protecting abbé, and it would not be easy to tell the reason which prevented his doing so. It

was like a blending of timidity and audacity, of false shame and romantic honor. And, indeed, what would the abbé have replied to him, if he had told his story of the night before? "You had the unique good fortune to pick up this fan; did you know how to profit by it? What did the marquise say to you?"

"Nothing."

"You should have spoken to her."

"I was confused; I had lost my head."

"That was wrong; one must know how to seize an opportunity; but this can be repaired. Would you like me to present you to Monsieur So-and-so, one of my friends; or perhaps to Madame Such-a-one? That would be still better. We will try and secure for you access to this marquise who frightened you so, and then"—and so forth.

Now the chevalier little relished anything of this kind. It seemed to him that, in telling his adventure, he would, so to speak, soil and mar it. He said to himself that chance had done for him something unheard of, incredible, and that it should remain a secret between himself and Fortune. To confide this secret to the first comer was, to his thinking, to rob it of its value, and to show himself unworthy of it. "I went alone yesterday to the castle at Versailles," thought he, "I can surely go alone to Trianon?" This was, at the time, the abode of the favorite.

Such a way of thinking might, and even should, appear extravagant to calculating minds, who neglect no detail, and leave as little as possible to chance; but colder mortals, if they were ever young, and not every-

body is so, even in youth, have known that strange sentiment, both weak and bold, dangerous and seductive, which drags us to our fate. One feels one's self blind, and wishes to be so; one does not know where one is going and yet walks on. The charm of the thing consists in this recklessness and this very ignorance; it is the pleasure of the artist in his dreams, of the lover spending the night beneath the windows of his mistress; it is the instinct of the soldier; it is, above all, that of the gamester.

The chevalier, almost without knowing it, had thus taken his way to Trianon. Without being very *paré,* as they said in those days, he lacked neither elegance nor that indescribable air which forbids a chance lackey, meeting one, from daring to ask where one is going. It was, therefore, not difficult for him, thanks to information he had obtained at the inn, to reach the gate of the château—if one can so call that marble *bonbonnière,* which has seen so many pleasures and pains in bygone days. Unfortunately, the gate was closed, and a stout Swiss wearing a plain coat was walking about, his hands behind his back, in the inner avenue, like a person who is not expecting any one.

"The King is here!" said the chevalier to himself, "or else the marquise is away. Evidently, when the doors are closed, and valets stroll about, the masters are either shut in or gone out."

What was to be done? Full as he had been, a moment earlier, of courage and confidence, he now felt, all at once, confused and disappointed. The mere thought, "The King is here!" alone gave him more

alarm than those few words, on the night before: "The King is about to pass!" For then he was but facing the unknown, and now he knew that icy stare, that implacable, impassible majesty.

"Ah! Bon Dieu! What a figure I should cut if I were to be so mad as to try and penetrate this garden, and find myself face to face with this superb monarch, sipping his coffee beside a rivulet."

At once the sinister shadow of the Bastille seemed to fall before the poor lover; instead of the charming image that he had retained of the marquise and her smile, he saw dungeons, cells, black bread, questionable water; he knew the story of Latude, thirty years an inmate of the Bastille. Little by little his hope seemed to be taking to itself wings.

"And yet," he again said to himself, "I am doing no harm, nor the King either. I protest against an injustice; but I never wrote or sang scurrilous songs. I was so well received at Versailles yesterday, and the lackeys were so polite! What am I afraid of? Of committing a blunder? I shall make many more which will repair this one."

He approached the gate and touched it with his finger. It was not quite closed. He opened it, and resolutely entered.

The gatekeeper turned round with a look of annoyance.

"What are you looking for? Where are you going?"

"I am going to Madame de Pompadour."

"Have you an audience?"

"Yes."

"Where is your letter?"

He was no longer the "marquis" of the night before, and, this time, there was no Duc d'Aumont. The chevalier lowered his eyes sadly, and noticed that his white stockings and Rhinestone buckles were covered with dust. He had made the mistake of coming on foot, in a region where no one walked. The gatekeeper also bent his eyes, and scanned him, not from head to foot, but from foot to head. The dress seemed neat enough, but the hat was rather askew, and the hair lacked powder.

"You have no letter. What do you wish?"

"I wish to speak to Madame de Pompadour."

"Really! And you think this is the way it is done?"

"I know nothing about it. Is the King here?"

"Perhaps. Go about your business and leave me alone."

The chevalier did not wish to lose his temper, but, in spite of himself, this insolence made him turn pale.

"I sometimes have told a lackey to go away," he replied, "but a lackey never said so to me."

"Lackey! I a lackey?" exclaimed the enraged gatekeeper.

"Lackey, doorkeeper, valet, or menial, I care not, and it matters little."

The gatekeeper made a step toward the chevalier with clenched fists and face aflame. The chevalier, brought to himself by the appearance of a threat, lifted the handle of his sword slightly.

"Take care, fellow," said he, "I am a gentleman, and it would cost me but thirty-six livres to put a boor like you under ground."

"If you are a nobleman, monsieur, I belong to the King; I am only doing my duty; so do not think—"

At this moment the flourish of a hunting-horn sounding from the Bois de Satory was heard afar, and lost itself in the echo. The chevalier allowed his sword to drop into its scabbard, no longer thinking of the interrupted quarrel.

"I declare," said he, "it is the King starting for the hunt! Why did you not tell me that before?"

"That has nothing to do with me, nor with you either."

"Listen to me, my good man. The King is not here; I have no letter, I have no audience. Here is some money for you; let me in."

He drew from his pocket several pieces of gold. The gatekeeper scanned him anew with a superb contempt.

"What is that?" said he, disdainfully. "Is it thus you seek to penetrate into a royal dwelling? Instead of making you go out, take care I don't lock you in."

"*You*—you valet!" said the chevalier, getting angry again and once more seizing his sword.

"Yes, I," repeated the big man. But during this conversation, in which the historian regrets to have compromised his hero, thick clouds had darkened the sky; a storm was brewing. A flash of lightning burst forth, followed by a violent peal of thunder, and the rain began to fall heavily. The chevalier, who

still held his gold, saw a drop of water on his dusty shoe as large as a crown piece.

"Peste!" said he, "let us find shelter. It would never do to get wet."

He turned nimbly toward the den of Cerberus, or, if you please, the gatekeeper's lodge. Once in there, he threw himself unceremoniously into the big arm-chair of the gatekeeper himself.

"Heavens! How you annoy me!" said he, "and how unfortunate I am! You take me for a conspirator, and you do not understand that I have in my pocket a petition for his Majesty! If I am from the country, you are nothing but a dolt."

The gatekeeper, for answer, went to a corner to fetch his halberd, and remained standing thus with the weapon in his fist.

"When are you going away?" he cried out in a stentorian voice.

The quarrel, in turn forgotten and taken up again, seemed this time to be becoming quite serious, and already the gatekeeper's two big hands trembled strangely on his pike;—what was to happen? I do not know. But, suddenly turning his head—"Ah!" said the chevalier, "who comes here?"

A young page mounted on a splendid horse (not an English one;—at that time thin legs were not the fashion) came up at full speed. The road was soaked with rain; the gate was but half open. There was a pause; the keeper advanced and opened the gate. The page spurred his horse, which had stopped for the space of an instant; it tried to resume its gait,

but missed its footing, and, slipping on the damp ground, fell.

It is very awkward, almost dangerous, to raise a fallen horse. A riding-whip is of no use. The kicking of the beast, which is doing its best, is extremely disagreeable, especially when one's own leg is caught under the saddle.

The chevalier, however, came to the rescue without thinking of these inconveniences, and set about it so cleverly that the horse was soon raised and the rider freed. But the latter was covered with mud and could scarcely limp along.

Carried as well as might be to the gatekeeper's lodge and seated in his turn in the big armchair, "Sir," said he to the chevalier, "you are certainly a nobleman. You have rendered me a great service, but you can render me a still greater one. Here is a message from the King for Madame la Marquise, and this message is very urgent, as you see, since my horse and I, in order to go faster, almost broke our necks. You understand that, wounded as I am, with a lame leg, I could not deliver this paper. I should have, in order to do so, to be carried myself. Will you go there in my stead?"

At the same time he drew from his pocket a large envelope ornamented with gilt arabesques and fastened with the royal seal.

"Very willingly, sir," replied the chevalier, taking the envelope.

And, nimble and light as a feather, he set out at a run and on the tips of his toes.

V

When the chevalier arrived at the château he found another doorkeeper in front of the peristyle:

"By the King's order," said the young man, who this time no longer feared halberds, and, showing his letter, he passed gaily between half a dozen lackeys.

A tall usher, planted in the middle of the vestibule, seeing the order and the royal seal, gravely inclined himself, like a poplar bent by the wind—then, smiling, he touched with one of his bony fingers the corner of a piece of paneling.

A little swinging door, masked by tapestry, at once opened as if of its own accord. The bony man made an obsequious sign, the chevalier entered, and the tapestry, which had been drawn apart, fell softly behind him.

A silent valet introduced him into a drawing-room, then into a corridor, in which there were two or three closed doors, then at last into a second drawing-room, and begged him to wait a moment.

"Am I here again in the château of Versailles?" the chevalier asked himself. "Are we going to begin another game of hide-and-seek?"

Trianon was, at that time, neither what it is now nor what it had been. It has been said that Madame de Maintenon had made of Versailles an oratory, and Madame de Pompadour a boudoir. It has also been said of Trianon that *ce petit château de porcelaine* was the boudoir of Madame de Montespan. Be that as it may, concerning these boudoirs, it appears that Louis

XV put them everywhere. This or that gallery, which his ancestor walked majestically, was then divided oddly into an infinity of apartments. There were some of every color, and the King went fluttering about in all these gardens of silk and velvet.

"Do you think my little furnished apartments are in good taste?" he one day asked the beautiful Comtesse de Sérrant.

"No," said she, "I would have them in blue."

As blue was the King's color, this answer flattered him.

At their next meeting, Madame de Sérrant found the salon upholstered in blue, as she had wished it.

That in which the chevalier now found himself alone was neither blue nor pink, it was all mirrors. We know how much a pretty woman with a lovely figure gains by letting her image repeat itself in a thousand aspects. She bewilders, she envelops, so to speak, him whom she desires to please. To whatever side he turns, he sees her. How can he avoid being charmed? He must either take to flight or own himself conquered.

The chevalier looked at the garden, too. There, behind, the bushes and labyrinths, the statues and the marble vases, that pastoral style which the marquise was about to introduce, and which, later on, Madame Du Barry and Marie Antoinette were to push to such a high degree of perfection, was beginning to show itself. Already there appeared the rural fantasies where the *blasé* conceits were disappearing. Already the puffing tritons, the grave goddesses, and the

learned nymphs, the busts with flowing wigs, frozen with horror in their wealth of verdure, beheld an English garden rise from the ground, amid the wondering trees. Little lawns, little streams, little bridges, were soon to dethrone Olympus to replace it by a dairy, strange parody of nature, which the English copy without understanding—very child's play, for the nonce the pastime of an indolent master who tried in vain to escape the ennui of Versailles while remaining at Versailles itself.

But the chevalier was too charmed, too enraptured at finding himself there for a critical thought to present itself to his mind. He was, on the contrary, ready to admire everything, and was indeed admiring, twirling his missive between his fingers as a rustic does his hat, when a pretty waiting-maid opened the door, and said to him softly:

"Come, monsieur."

He followed her, and after having once more passed through several corridors which were more or less mysterious, she ushered him into a large apartment where the shutters were half-closed. Here she stopped and seemed to listen.

"Still at hide-and-seek!" said the chevalier to himself. However, at the end of a few moments, yet another door opened, and another waiting-maid, who seemed to be even prettier than the first, repeated to him in the same tone the same words:

"Come, monsieur."

If he had been the victim of one kind of emotion at Versailles, he was subject to another, and still

deeper feeling now, for he stood on the threshold of the temple in which the divinity dwelt. He advanced with a palpitating heart. A soft light, slightly veiled by thin, gauze curtains, succeeded obscurity; a delicious perfume, almost imperceptible, pervaded the air around him; the waiting-maid timidly drew back the corner of a silk portière, and, at the end of a large chamber furnished with elegant simplicity, he beheld the lady of the fan—the all-powerful marquise.

She was alone, seated before a table, wrapped in a dressing-gown, her head resting on her hand, and, seemingly, deeply preoccupied. On seeing the chevalier enter, she rose with a sudden and apparently involuntary movement.

"You come on behalf of the King?"

The chevalier might have answered, but he could think of nothing better than to bow profoundly while presenting to the marquise the letter which he brought her. She took it, or rather seized upon it, with extreme eagerness. Her hands trembled on the envelope as she broke the seal.

This letter, written by the King's hand, was rather long. She devoured it at first, so to speak, with a glance, then she read it greedily, with profound attention, with wrinkled brow and tightened lips. She was not beautiful thus, and no longer resembled the magic apparition of the *petit foyer*. When she reached the end, she seemed to reflect. Little by little her face, which had turned pale, assumed a faint color (at this hour she did not wear rouge), and not only did she regain that graceful air which habitually belonged to

her, but a gleam of real beauty illumined her delicate features; one might have taken her cheeks for two rose-leaves. She heaved a little sigh, allowed the letter to fall upon the table, and, turning toward the chevalier, said, with the most charming smile:

"I kept you waiting, monsieur, but I was not yet dressed, and, indeed, am hardly so even now. That is why I was forced to get you to come through the private rooms, for I am almost as much besieged here as though I were at home. I would like to answer the King's note. Would it be too much trouble to you to do an errand for me?"

This time he *must* speak; the chevalier had had time to regain a little courage:

"Alas! madame," said he, sadly, "you confer a great favor on me, but, unfortunately, I can not profit by it."

"Why not?"

"I have not the honor to belong to his Majesty."

"How, then, did you come here?"

"By chance; I met on my way a page who had been thrown and who begged me—"

"How 'thrown'?" repeated the marquise, bursting out laughing. She seemed so happy at this moment that gaiety came to her without an effort.

"Yes, madame, he fell from his horse at the gate. I luckily found myself there to help him to rise, and, as his dress was very much disordered, he begged me to take charge of his message."

"And by what chance did you find yourself there?"

"Madame, it was because I had a petition to present to his Majesty."

"His Majesty lives at Versailles."

"Yes, but you live here."

"Oh! So it is you who wished to entrust me with a message."

"Madame, I beg you to believe—"

"Do not trouble yourself, you are not the first. But why do you address yourself to me? I am but a woman—like any other."

As she uttered these words with a somewhat ironical air, the marquise threw a triumphant look upon the letter she had just read.

"Madame," continued the chevalier, "I have always heard that men exercise power, and that women—"

"Guide it, eh? Well, monsieur, there is a queen of France."

"I know it, madame; that is how it happened that I found myself *here* this morning."

The marquise was more than accustomed to such compliments, though they were generally made in a whisper; but, in the present circumstances, this appeared to be quite singularly gratifying to her.

"And on what faith," said she, "on what assurance, did you believe yourself able to penetrate as far as this? For you did not count, I suppose, upon a horse's falling on the way."

"Madame, I believed—I hoped—"

"What did you hope?"

"I hoped that chance—might make—"

"Chance again! Chance is apparently one of your friends; but I warn you that if you have no other, it is a sad recommendation."

Perhaps offended Chance wished to avenge herself for this irreverence, for the chevalier, whom these few questions had more and more troubled, suddenly perceived, on the corner of the table, the identical fan that he had picked up the night before. He took it, and, as on the night before, presented it to the marquise, bending the knee before her.

"Here, madame," he said to her, "is the only friend that could plead for me—"

The marquise seemed at first astonished, and hesitated a moment, looking now at the fan, now at the chevalier.

"Ah! you are right," she said at last, "it is you, monsieur! I recognize you. It is you whom I saw yesterday, after the play, as I went by with M. de Richelieu. I let my fan drop, and you 'found yourself there,' as you were saying."

"Yes, madame."

"And very gallantly, as a true chevalier, you returned it to me. I did not thank you, but I was sure, all the same, that he who knows how to pick up a fan with such grace would also know, at the right time, how to pick up the glove. And we are not ill-pleased at that, we women."

"And it is but too true, madame; for, on reaching here just now, I almost had a duel with the gatekeeper."

"Mercy on us!" said the marquise, once more seized with a fit of gaiety. "With the gatekeeper! And what about?"

"He would not let me come in."

"That would have been a pity! But who are you, monsieur? And what is your request?"

"Madame, I am called the Chevalier de Vauvert. M. de Biron had asked in my behalf for a cornetcy in the Guards."

"Oh! I remember now. You come from Neauflette; you are in love with Mademoiselle d'Annebault—"

"Madame, who could have told you?"

"Oh! I warn you that I am much to be feared. When memory fails me, I guess. You are a relative of the Abbé de Chauvelin, and were refused on that account; is not that so? Where is your petition?"

"Here it is, madame; but indeed I can not understand—"

"Why need you understand? Rise and lay your paper on the table. I am going to answer the King's letter; you will take him, at the same time, your request and my letter."

"But, madame, I thought I had mentioned to you—"

"You will go. You entered here on the business of the King, is not that true? Well, then, you will enter there in the business of the Marquise de Pompadour, lady of the palace to the Queen."

The chevalier bowed without a word, seized with a sort of stupefaction. The world had long known how much talk, how many ruses and intrigues, the favorite had brought to bear, and what obstinacy she had shown to obtain this title, which in reality brought her nothing but a cruel affront from the Dauphin. She had longed for it for ten years; she willed it, and

she had succeeded. So M. de Vauvert, whom she did not know, although she knew of his love, pleased her as a bearer of happy news.

Immovable, standing behind her, the chevalier watched the marquise as she wrote, first, with all her heart—with passion—then with reflection, stopping, passing her hand under her little nose, delicate as amber. She grew impatient: the presence of a witness disturbed her. At last she made up her mind and drew her pen through something; it must be owned that after all it was but a rough draft.

Opposite the chevalier, on the other side of the table, there glittered a fine Venetian mirror. This timid messenger hardly dared raise his eyes. It would, however, have been difficult not to see in this mirror, over the head of the marquise, the anxious and charming face of the new lady of the palace.

"How pretty she is!" thought he; "it is a pity that I am in love with somebody else; but Athénaïs is more beautiful, and moreover it would be on my part such a horrible disloyalty."

"What are you talking about?" said the marquise. The chevalier, as was his wont, had thought aloud without knowing it. "What are you saying?"

"I, madame? I am waiting."

"There; that is done," the marquise went on, taking another sheet of paper; but at the slight movement she had made in turning around the dressing-gown had slipped on her shoulder.

Fashion is a strange thing. Our grandmothers thought nothing of going to court in immense robes

exposing almost the entire bosom, and it was by no means considered indecent; but they carefully hid the back of their necks, which the fine ladies of to-day expose so freely in the balcony of the opera. This is a newly invented beauty.

On the frail, white, dainty shoulder of Madame de Pompadour there was a little black mark that looked like a fly floating in milk. The chevalier, serious as a giddy boy who is trying to keep his countenance, looked at the mark, and the marquise, holding her pen in the air, looked at the chevalier in the mirror.

In that mirror a rapid glance was exchanged, which meant to say on the one side, "You are charming," and on the other, "I am not sorry for it."

However, the marquise readjusted her dressing-gown.

"You are looking at my beauty-spot?"

"I am not looking, madame; I see and I admire."

"Here is my letter; take it to the King with your petition."

"But, madame—"

"Well?"

"His Majesty is hunting; I have just heard the horn in the wood of Satory."

"That is true. I did not think of it. Well, to-morrow. The day after; it matters little. No, immediately. Go. You will give that to Lebel. Good-by, monsieur. Try and remember the beauty-spot you have just seen; the King alone in the whole kingdom has seen it; and as for your friend, Chance, tell her,

I beg of you, to take care and not chatter to herself so loud, as she did just now. Farewell, chevalier."

She touched a little bell, then, lifting a flood of laces upon her sleeve, held out to the young man her bare arm. He once more bent low, and with the tips of his lips scarcely brushed the rosy nails of the marquise. She saw no impoliteness in it—far from it—but, perhaps, a little too much modesty.

At once the little waiting-maids reappeared (the big ones were not yet up), and, standing behind them, like a steeple in the middle of a flock of sheep, the bony man, still smiling, was pointing the way.

VI

Alone, ensconced in an old armchair in the back of his little room at the sign of "the Sun," the chevalier waited the next day, then the next, and no news!

"Singular woman! Gentle and imperious, good and bad, the most frivolous of women, and the most obstinate! She has forgotten me. What misery! She is right;—she is all-powerful, and I am nothing."

He had risen, and was walking about the room.

"Nothing!—no, I am but a poor devil. How truly my father spoke! The marquise was mocking me; that is all; while I was looking at her, it was only the reflection in that mirror, and in my eyes, of her own charms—which are, certainly, incomparable—that made her look so pleased! Yes, her eyes are small, but what grace! And Latour, before Diderot, has taken the dust from a butterfly's wing to paint her portrait. She is not very tall, but her figure is

perfectly exquisite. Ah! Mademoiselle d'Annebault! Ah! my beloved friend, is it possible that I, too, should forget?"

Two or three sharp raps at the door awoke him from his grief.

"Who is there?"

The bony man, clad all in black, with a splendid pair of silk stockings, which simulated calves that were lacking, entered, and made a deep bow.

"This evening, Monsieur le Chevalier, there is to be a masked ball at the court, and Madame la Marquise sends me to say that you are invited."

"That is enough, monsieur. Many thanks."

As soon as the bony man had retired, the chevalier ran to the bell; the same maid-servant who, three days before, had done her best to be of service to him, assisted him to put on the same spangled coat, striving to acquit herself even better than before.

And then the young man took his way toward the palace, invited this time, and more quiet outwardly, but more anxious and less bold than when he had made his first steps in that, to him, still unknown world.

VII

Bewildered, almost as much as on the former occasion, by all the splendors of Versailles, which this evening was not empty, the chevalier walked in the great gallery, looking on every side and doing all he could to learn why he was there; but nobody seemed to think of accosting him. At the end of an hour he

became wearied and was about to leave, when two masks, exactly alike, seated on a bench, stopped him on his way. One of them took aim at him with her finger as if with a pistol; the other rose and went to him:

"It appears, monsieur," said the mask, carelessly taking his arm, "that you are on very good terms with our marquise."

"I beg your pardon, madame, but of whom are you speaking?"

"You know well enough."

"Not the least in the world."

"Oh! but indeed you do."

"Not at all."

"All the court knows it."

"I do not belong to the court."

"You are playing the child. I tell you it is well known!"

"That may be, madame, but I am ignorant of it."

"You are not ignorant, however, of the fact that the day before yesterday a page fell from his horse at the gate of Trianon. Were you not there by chance?"

"Yes, madame."

"Did you not help him to rise?"

"Yes, madame."

"And did not you enter the château?"

"Certainly."

"And was not a paper given to you?"

"Yes, madame."

"And did you not take it to the King?"

"Assuredly."

"The King was not at Trianon; he was hunting; the marquise was alone—is not that so?"

"Yes, madame."

"She had just risen; she was scarcely clad, excepting, as it is rumored, in a wide dressing-gown."

"People whom one can not prevent from speaking tell all that runs through their heads."

"That is all well enough, but it appears that there passed between your eyes and hers a look which did not offend her."

"What do you mean by that, madame?"

"That you did not displease her."

"I know nothing about that, and I should be distressed that such sweet and rare good-will, which I did not expect, and which touched me to the bottom of my heart, should give occasion to any idle speeches."

"You take fire too quickly, chevalier; one would think that you were challenging the whole court; you would never succeed in killing so many people."

"But, madame, if the page fell, and if I carried his message—allow me to ask you why I am interrogated."

The mask pressed his arm and said to him:

"Listen, monsieur."

"As much as you please, madame."

"This is what we are thinking about now: The King no longer loves the marquise, and nobody believes that he ever loved her. She has just committed an imprudence; she has set the whole Parliament

against her with her "two sous" tax, and to-day she dares attack a far greater power—the Society of Jesuits. She will fail, but she has weapons, and, before perishing, she will defend herself."

"Well, madame, what can I do?"

"I will tell you. M. de Choiseul has half quarreled with M. de Bernis; neither of them is sure what it is he would like to attempt. Bernis is going away; Choiseul will take his place. A word from you can decide it."

"In what way, madame, pray?"

"By allowing your story of the other day to be told."

"What earthly connection can there be between my visit, the Jesuits, and the Parliament?"

"Write me one word and the marquise is lost. And do not doubt that the warmest interest, the most complete gratitude—"

"I humbly beg your pardon again, madame, but what you are asking of me would be an act of cowardice."

"Is there any honor in politics?"

"I know nothing of all that. Madame de Pompadour let her fan fall before me; I picked it up; I gave it back to her; she thanked me; she permitted me with that peculiar grace of hers to thank her in my turn."

"A truce to ceremonies: time flies; my name is the Countess d'Estrades; you love Mademoiselle d'Annebault, my niece; do not say no, it is useless. You are seeking a cornetcy; you shall have it to-morrow,

and if you care for Athénaïs you will soon be my nephew."

"Ah! madame, what excess of goodness!"

"But you must speak."

"No, madame."

"I have been told that you love that little girl."

"As much as it is possible to love; but if ever my love is to declare itself in her presence my honor must also be there."

"You are very obstinate, chevalier! Is that your final reply?"

"It is the last, as it was the first."

"You refuse to enter the Guards? You refuse the hand of my niece "

"Yes, madame, if that be the price."

Madame d'Estrades cast upon the chevalier a piercing look, full of curiosity; then seeing in his face no sign of hesitation she slowly walked away, losing herself in the crowd.

The chevalier, unable to make anything of this singular adventure, went and sat down in a corner of the gallery.

"What does that woman mean to do?" said he to himself. "She must be a little mad. She wishes to upset the state by means of a silly calumny, and she proposes to me that in order to merit the hand of her niece I should dishonor myself. But Athénaïs would no longer care for me, or, if she lent herself to such an intrigue, I would no longer care for her. What! Strive to harm this good marquise, to defame her, to blacken her character. Never! no, never!"

Always intent upon his own thoughts, the chevalier very probably would have risen and spoken aloud, but just then a small rosy finger touched him on the shoulder.

He raised his eyes and saw before him the pair of masks who had stopped him.

"You do not wish to help us a little then?" said one of the masks, disguising her voice. But although the two costumes were exactly alike, and all seemed calculated to mislead, the chevalier was not deceived. Neither the look nor the tone was the same.

"Will you answer, sir?"

"No, madame."

"Will you write?"

"Neither will I write."

"It is true that you are obstinate. Good-night, lieutenant."

"What do you say, madame?"

"There is your commission and your marriage contract." And she threw the fan to him.

It was the one which the chevalier had already twice picked up. The little cupids of Boucher sported on the parchment of the gilded mother-of-pearl masterpiece. There was no longer any doubt; it was the fan of Madame de Pompadour.

"Heavens! Marquise, is it possible?"

"Very possible," said she, raising the little piece of black veil on her chin.

"I know, madame, how to answer—"

"It is not necessary. You are a loyal gentleman, and we shall see each other again, for we are to be

in the same house. The King has placed you in the 'cornette blanche.' Remember that for a petitioner there is no greater eloquence than to know how to be silent if need be—"

"And forgive us," added she, laughing as she ran away, "if before bestowing upon you our niece's hand, we thought it expedient to find out your true worth." [3]

[3] Madame d'Estrades not long after was disgraced, together with M. d'Argenson, for having conspired, this time seriously, against Madame de Pompadour.

THE MUMMY'S FOOT

BY THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Théophile Gautier, great colorist and globe-trotter, was born at Tarbes, in 1811, and died at Neuilly in 1872. He began life as a painter, then turned to poetry, and finally adopted prose for the expression of his ideas, writing some three hundred volumes in all of poetry, romances, parodies, critiques, histories, tales, etc.

After being presented to Victor Hugo, he became an enthusiastic apostle of Romanticism. He lived in an atmosphere of Oriental splendor noticeable in "The Mummy's Foot." His style is unusually rich and sensuous, with a refined fancy finely chiseled. He has exerted a considerable influence on the present generation of writers.

Though Gautier has expressed few original ideas and few opinions, and is discursive, he is, as his friend Baudelaire said of him, "an unimpeachable poet, a finished magician in French letters."

THE MUMMY'S FOOT

BY THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

I HAD entered, in an idle mood, the shop of one of those curiosity-venders, who are called *marchands de bric-à-brac* in that Parisian *argot* which is so perfectly unintelligible elsewhere in France.

You have doubtless glanced occasionally through the windows of some of these shops, which have become so numerous now that it is fashionable to buy antiquated furniture, and that every petty stockbroker thinks he must have his *chambre au moyen âge*.

There is one thing there which clings alike to the shop of the dealer in old iron, the wareroom of the tapestry-maker, the laboratory of the chemist, and the studio of the painter—in all those gloomy dens where a furtive daylight filters in through the window-shutters the most manifestly ancient thing is dust;—the cobwebs are more authentic than the guimp laces; and the old pear-tree furniture on exhibition is actually younger than the mahogany which arrived but yesterday from America.

The warehouse of my bric-à-brac dealer was a veritable Capharnaum; all ages and all nations seemed to have made their rendezvous there; an Etruscan lamp of red clay stood upon a Boule cabinet, with

Translated by Lafcadio Hearn.

ebony panels, brightly striped by lines of inlaid brass; a duchess of the court of Louis XV nonchalantly extended her fawn-like feet under a massive table of the time of Louis XIII, with heavy spiral supports of oak, and carven designs of Chimeras and foliage intermingled.

Upon the denticulated shelves of several sideboards glittered immense Japanese dishes with red and blue designs relieved by gilded hatching; side by side with enameled works by Bernard Palissy, representing serpents, frogs, and lizards in relief.

From disemboweled cabinets escaped cascades of silver-lustrous Chinese silks and waves of tinsel, which an oblique sunbeam shot through with luminous beads; while portraits of every era, in frames more or less tarnished, smiled through their yellow varnish.

The striped breastplate of a damascened suit of Milanese armor glittered in one corner; Loves and Nymphs of porcelain; Chinese grotesques, vases of *célandon* and crackle-ware; Saxon and old Sèvres cups encumbered the shelves and nooks of the apartment.

The dealer followed me closely through the tortuous way contrived between the piles of furniture; warding off with his hand the hazardous sweep of my coat-skirts; watching my elbows with the uneasy attention of an antiquarian and a usurer.

It was a singular face, that of the merchant—an immense skull, polished like a knee, and surrounded by a thin aureole of white hair, which brought out

the clear salmon tint of his complexion all the more strikingly, lent him a false aspect of patriarchal *bonhomie*, counteracted, however, by the scintillation of two little yellow eyes which trembled in their orbits like two louis-d'or upon quicksilver. The curve of his nose presented an aquiline silhouette, which suggested the Oriental or Jewish type. His hands—thin, slender, full of nerves which projected like strings upon the finger-board of a violin, and armed with claws like those on the terminations of bats' wings—shook with senile trembling; but those convulsively agitated hands became firmer than steel pincers or lobsters' claws when they lifted any precious article—an onyx cup, a Venetian glass, or a dish of Bohemian crystal. This strange old man had an aspect so thoroughly rabbinical and cabalistic that he would have been burnt on the mere testimony of his face three centuries ago.

"Will you not buy something from me to-day, sir? Here is a Malay kreese with a blade undulating like flame: look at those grooves contrived for the blood to run along, those teeth set backward so as to tear out the entrails in withdrawing the weapon—it is a fine character of ferocious arm, and will look well in your collection: this two-handed sword is very beautiful—it is the work of Josepe de la Hera; and this *colichemarde*, with its fenestrated guard—what a superb specimen of handicraft!"

"No; I have quite enough weapons and instruments of carnage;—I want a small figure, something which will suit me as a paper-weight; for I can not endure

those trumpery bronzes which the stationers sell, and which may be found on everybody's desk."

The old gnome foraged among his ancient wares, and finally arranged before me some antique bronzes —so-called, at least; fragments of malachite; little Hindu or Chinese idols—a kind of poussah-toys in jade-stone, representing the incarnations of Brahma or Vishnu, and wonderfully appropriate to the very undivine office of holding papers and letters in place.

I was hesitating between a porcelain dragon, all constellated with warts—its mouth formidable with bristling tusks and ranges of teeth—and an abominable little Mexican fetish, representing the god Vitziliputzili *au naturel;* when I caught sight of a charming foot, which I at first took for a fragment of some antique Venus.

It had those beautiful ruddy and tawny tints that lend to Florentine bronze that warm, living look so much preferable to the gray-green aspect of common bronzes, which might easily be mistaken for statues in a state of putrefaction: satiny gleams played over its rounded forms, doubtless polished by the amorous kisses of twenty centuries; for it seemed a Corinthian bronze, a work of the best era of art—perhaps molded by Lysippus himself.

"That foot will be my choice," I said to the merchant, who regarded me with an ironical and saturnine air, and held out the object desired that I might examine it more fully.

I was surprised at its lightness; it was not a foot of metal, but in sooth a foot of flesh—an embalmed

foot—a mummy's foot: on examining it still more closely the very grain of the skin, and the almost imperceptible lines impressed upon it by the texture of the bandages, became perceptible. The toes were slender and delicate, and terminated by perfectly formed nails, pure and transparent as agates; the great toe, slightly separated from the rest, afforded a happy contrast, in the antique style, to the position of the other toes, and lent it an aerial lightness—the grace of a bird's foot;—the sole, scarcely streaked by a few almost imperceptible cross lines, afforded evidence that it had never touched the bare ground, and had only come in contact with the finest matting of Nile rushes, and the softest carpets of panther skin.

"Ha, ha!—you want the foot of the Princess Hermonthis"—exclaimed the merchant, with a strange giggle, fixing his owlish eyes upon me—"ha, ha, ha! —for a paper-weight!—an original idea!—artistic idea! Old Pharaoh would certainly have been surprised had some one told him that the foot of his adored daughter would be used for a paper-weight after he had had a mountain of granite hollowed out as a receptacle for the triple coffin, painted and gilded —covered with hieroglyphics and beautiful paintings of the Judgment of Souls"—continued the queer little merchant, half audibly, as though talking to himself!

"How much will you charge me for this mummy fragment?"

"Ah, the highest price I can get; for it is a superb piece: if I had the match of it you could not have it

for less than five hundred francs;—the daughter of a Pharaoh! nothing is more rare."

"Assuredly that is not a common article; but, still, how much do you want? In the first place, let me warn you that all my wealth consists of just five louis: I can buy anything that costs five louis, but nothing dearer;—you might search my vest pockets and most secret drawers without even finding one poor five-franc piece more."

"Five louis for the foot of the Princess Hermonthis! that is very little, very little indeed; 'tis an authentic foot," muttered the merchant, shaking his head, and imparting a peculiar rotary motion to his eyes. "Well, take it, and I will give you the bandages into the bargain," he added, wrapping the foot in an ancient damask rag—"very fine! real damask!—Indian damask which has never been redyed; it is strong, and yet it is soft," he mumbled, stroking the frayed tissue with his fingers, through the trade-acquired habit which moved him to praise even an object of so little value that he himself deemed it only worth the giving away.

He poured the gold coins into a sort of medieval alms-purse hanging at his belt, repeating:

"The foot of the Princess Hermonthis, to be used for a paper-weight!"

Then turning his phosphorescent eyes upon me, he exclaimed in a voice strident as the crying of a cat which has swallowed a fish-bone:

"Old Pharaoh will not be well pleased: he loved his daughter—the dear man!"

"You speak as if you were a contemporary of his: you are old enough, goodness knows! but you do not date back to the Pyramids of Egypt," I answered, laughingly, from the threshold.

I went home, delighted with my acquisition.

With the idea of putting it to profitable use as soon as possible, I placed the foot of the divine Princess Hermonthis upon a heap of papers scribbled over with verses, in themselves an undecipherable mosaic work of erasures; articles freshly begun; letters forgotten, and posted in the table drawer instead of the letter-box—an error to which absent-minded people are peculiarly liable. The effect was charming, bizarre, and romantic.

Well satisfied with this embellishment, I went out with the gravity and pride becoming one who feels that he has the ineffable advantage over all the passers-by whom he elbows, of possessing a piece of the Princess Hermonthis, daughter of Pharaoh.

I looked upon all who did not possess, like myself, a paper-weight so authentically Egyptian, as very ridiculous people; and it seemed to me that the proper occupation of every sensible man should consist in the mere fact of having a mummy's foot upon his desk.

Happily I met some friends, whose presence distracted me in my infatuation with this new acquisition: I went to dinner with them; for I could not very well have dined with myself.

When I came back that evening, with my brain slightly confused by a few glasses of wine, a vague

whiff of Oriental perfume delicately titillated my olfactory nerves: the heat of the room had warmed the natron, bitumen, and myrrh in which the *paraschistes*, who cut open the bodies of the dead, had bathed the corpse of the princess;—it was a perfume at once sweet and penetrating—a perfume that four thousand years had not been able to dissipate.

The Dream of Egypt was Eternity: her odors have the solidity of granite, and endure as long.

I soon drank deeply from the black cup of sleep: for a few hours all remained opaque to me; Oblivion and Nothingness inundated me with their sombre waves.

Yet light gradually dawned upon the darkness of my mind: dreams commenced to touch me softly in their silent flight.

The eyes of my soul were opened; and I beheld my chamber as it actually was: I might have believed myself awake, but for a vague consciousness which assured me that I slept, and that something fantastic was about to take place.

The odor of the myrrh had augmented in intensity: and I felt a slight headache, which I very naturally attributed to several glasses of champagne that we had drunk to the unknown gods and our future fortunes.

I peered through my room with a feeling of expectation which I saw nothing to justify: every article of furniture was in its proper place; the lamp, softly shaded by its globe of ground crystal, burned upon its bracket; the water-color sketches shone under their

Bohemian glass; the curtains hung down languidly; everything wore an aspect of tranquil slumber.

After a few moments, however, all this calm interior appeared to become disturbed; the woodwork cracked stealthily; the ash-covered log suddenly emitted a jet of blue flame; and the disks of the pateras seemed like great metallic eyes, watching, like myself, for the things which were about to happen.

My eyes accidentally fell upon the desk where I had placed the foot of the Princess Hermonthis.

Instead of remaining quiet—as behooved a foot which had been embalmed for four thousand years —it commenced to act in a nervous manner; contracted itself, and leaped over the papers like a startled frog;—one would have imagined that it had suddenly been brought into contact with a galvanic battery: I could distinctly hear the dry sound made by its little heel, hard as the hoof of a gazel.

I became rather discontented with my acquisition, inasmuch as I wished my paper-weights to be of a sedentary disposition, and thought it very unnatural that feet should walk about without legs; and I commenced to experience a feeling closely akin to fear.

Suddenly I saw the folds of my bed-curtain stir; and heard a bumping sound, like that caused by some person hopping on one foot across the floor. I must confess I became alternately hot and cold; that I felt a strange wind chill my back; and that my suddenly-rising hair caused my nightcap to execute a leap of several yards.

The bed-curtains opened, and I beheld the strangest figure imaginable before me.

It was a young girl of a very deep coffee-brown complexion, like the bayadere Amani, and possessing the purest Egyptian type of perfect beauty; her eyes were almond-shaped and oblique, with eyebrows so black that they seemed blue; her nose was exquisitely chiseled, almost Greek in its delicacy of outline; and she might indeed have been taken for a Corinthian statue of bronze, but for the prominence of her cheek-bones and the slightly African fulness of her lips, which compelled one to recognize her as belonging beyond all doubt to the hieroglyphic race which dwelt upon the banks of the Nile.

Her arms, slender and spindle-shaped, like those of very young girls, were encircled by a peculiar kind of metal bands, and bracelets of glass beads; her hair was all twisted into little cords; and she wore upon her bosom a little idol figure of green paste, bearing a whip with seven lashes, which proved it to be an image of Isis: her brow was adorned with a shining plate of gold; and a few traces of paint relieved the coppery tint of her cheeks.

As for her costume, it was very odd indeed.

Fancy a *pagne* or skirt all formed of little strips of material bedizened with red and black hieroglyphics, stiffened with bitumen, and apparently belonging to a freshly unbandaged mummy.

In one of those sudden flights of thought so common in dreams I heard the hoarse falsetto of the *bric-à-brac* dealer, repeating like a monotonous re-

frain, the phrase he had uttered in his shop with so enigmatical an intonation:

"Old Pharaoh will not be well pleased: he loved his daughter, the dear man!"

One strange circumstance, which was not at all calculated to restore my equanimity, was that the apparition had but one foot; the other was broken off at the ankle!

She approached the table where the foot was starting and fidgeting about more than ever; and there supported herself upon the edge of the desk. I saw her eyes fill with pearly-gleaming tears.

Although she had not as yet spoken, I fully comprehended the thoughts which agitated her: she looked at her foot—for it was indeed her own—with an exquisitely graceful expression of coquettish sadness; but the foot leaped and ran hither and thither, as though impelled on steel springs.

Twice or thrice she extended her hand to seize it, but could not succeed.

Then commenced between the Princess Hermonthis and her foot—which appeared to be endowed with a special life of its own—a very fantastic dialogue in a most ancient Coptic tongue, such as might have been spoken thirty centuries ago in the syrinxes of the land of Ser: luckily I understood Coptic perfectly well that night.

The Princess Hermonthis cried, in a voice sweet and vibrant as the tones of a crystal bell:

"Well, my dear little foot, you always flee from me; yet I always took good care of you. I bathed

you with perfumed water in a bowl of alabaster; I smoothed your heel with pumice-stone mixed with palm oil; your nails were cut with golden scissors and polished with a hippopotamus tooth; I was careful to select *tatbebs* for you, painted and embroidered and turned up at the toes, which were the envy of all the young girls in Egypt: you wore on your great toe rings bearing the device of the sacred Scarabæus; and you supported one of the lightest bodies that a lazy foot could sustain.

The foot replied in a pouting and chagrined tone:

"You know well that I do not belong to myself any longer. I have been bought and paid for: the old merchant knew what he was about: he bore you a grudge for having refused to espouse him. This is an ill turn which he has done you. The Arab who violated your royal coffin in the subterranean pits of the necropolis of Thebes was sent thither by him: he desired to prevent you from being present at the reunion of the shadowy nations in the cities below. Have you five pieces of gold for my ransom?"

"Alas, no!—my jewels, my rings, my purses of gold and silver, were all stolen from me," answered the Princess Hermonthis, with a sob.

"Princess," I then exclaimed, "I never retained anybody's foot unjustly;—even though you have not got the five louis which it cost me, I present it to you gladly: I should feel unutterably wretched to think that I were the cause of so amiable a person as the Princess Hermonthis being lame."

I delivered this discourse in a royally gallant, trou-

badour tone which must have astonished the beautiful Egyptian girl.

She turned a look of deepest gratitude upon me; and her eyes shone with bluish gleams of light.

She took her foot—which surrendered itself willingly this time—like a woman about to put on her little shoe; and adjusted it to her leg with much skill.

This operation over, she took a few steps about the room, as though to assure herself that she was really no longer lame.

"Ah, how pleased my father will be!—he who was so unhappy because of my mutilation; and who from the moment of my birth, set a whole nation at work to hollow me out a tomb so deep that he might preserve me intact until that last day, when souls must be weighed in the balance of Amenthi! Come with me to my father;—he will receive you kindly; for you have given me back my foot."

I thought this proposition natural enough. I arrayed myself in a dressing-gown of large-flowered pattern, which lent me a very Pharaonic aspect; hurriedly put on a pair of Turkish slippers; and informed the Princess Hermonthis that I was ready to follow her.

Before starting, Hermonthis took from her neck the little idol of green paste, and laid it on the scattered sheets of paper which covered the table.

"It is only fair," she observed, smilingly, "that I should replace your paper-weight."

She gave me her hand, which felt soft and cold, like the skin of a serpent; and we departed.

We passed for some time with the velocity of an arrow through a fluid and grayish expanse, in which half-formed silhouettes flitted swiftly by us, to right and left.

For an instant we saw only sky and sea.

A few moments later obelisks commenced to tower in the distance: pylons and vast flights of steps guarded by sphinxes became clearly outlined against the horizon.

We had reached our destination.

The princess conducted me to a mountain of rose-colored granite, in the face of which appeared an opening so narrow and low that it would have been difficult to distinguish it from the fissures in the rock, had not its location been marked by two stelæ wrought with sculptures.

Hermonthis kindled a torch, and led the way before me.

We traversed corridors hewn through the living rock: their walls, covered with hieroglyphics and paintings of allegorical processions, might well have occupied thousands of arms for thousands of years in their formation;—these corridors, of interminable length, opened into square chambers, in the midst of which pits had been contrived, through which we descended by cramp-irons or spiral stairways;—these pits again conducted us into other chambers, opening into other corridors, likewise decorated with painted sparrow-hawks, serpents coiled in circles, the symbols of the *tau* and *pedum*—prodigious works of art which no living eye can ever examine—interminable legends

of granite which only the dead have time to read through all eternity.

At last we found ourselves in a hall so vast, so enormous, so immeasurable, that the eye could not reach its limits; files of monstrous columns stretched far out of sight on every side, between which twinkled livid stars of yellowish flame;—points of light which revealed further depths incalculable in the darkness beyond.

The Princess Hermonthis still held my hand, and graciously saluted the mummies of her acquaintance.

My eyes became accustomed to the dim twilight; and objects became discernible.

I beheld the kings of the subterranean races seated upon thrones—grand old men, though dry, withered, wrinkled like parchment, and blackened with naphtha and bitumen—all wearing *pshents* of gold, and breastplates and gorgets glittering with precious stones; their eyes immovably fixed like the eyes of sphinxes, and their long beards whitened by the snow of centuries. Behind them stood their peoples, in the stiff and constrained posture enjoined by Egyptian art, all eternally preserving the attitude prescribed by the hieratic code. Behind these nations, the cats, ibixes, and crocodiles cotemporary with them—rendered monstrous of aspect by their swathing bands—mewed, flapped their wings, or extended their jaws in a saurian giggle.

All the Pharaohs were there—Cheops, Chephrenes, Psammetichus, Sesostris, Amenotaph—all the dark rulers of the pyramids and syrinxes:—on yet higher

thrones sat Chronos and Xixouthros—who was contemporary with the deluge; and Tubal Cain, who reigned before it.

The beard of King Xixouthros had grown seven times around the granite table, upon which he leaned, lost in deep reverie—and buried in dreams.

Further back, through a dusty cloud, I beheld dimly the seventy-two Preadamite Kings, with their seventy-two peoples—forever passed away.

After permitting me to gaze upon this bewildering spectacle a few moments, the Princess Hermonthis presented me to her father Pharaoh, who favored me with a most gracious nod.

"I have found my foot again!—I have found my foot!" cried the princess, clapping her little hands together with every sign of frantic joy: "it was this gentleman who restored it to me."

The races of Kemi, the races of Nahasi—all the black, bronzed, and copper-colored nations repeated in chorus:

"The Princess Hermonthis has found her foot again!"

Even Xixouthros himself was visibly affected.

He raised his heavy eyelids, stroked his mustache with his fingers, and turned upon me a glance weighty with centuries.

"By Oms, the dog of Hell, and Tmei, daughter of the Sun and of Truth! this is a brave and worthy lad!" exclaimed Pharaoh, pointing to me with his sceptre which was terminated with a lotus-flower.

"What recompense do you desire?"

Filled with that daring inspired by dreams in which nothing seems impossible, I asked him for the hand of the Princess Hermonthis;—the hand seemed to me a very proper antithetic recompense for the foot.

Pharaoh opened wide his great eyes of glass in astonishment at my witty request.

"What country do you come from? and what is your age?"

"I am a Frenchman; and I am twenty-seven years old, venerable Pharaoh."

"—Twenty-seven years old! and he wishes to espouse the Princess Hermonthis, who is thirty centuries old!"—cried out at once all the Thrones and all the Circles of Nations.

Only Hermonthis herself did not seem to think my request unreasonable.

"If you were even only two thousand years old," replied the ancient King, "I would willingly give you the Princess; but the disproportion is too great; and, besides, we must give our daughters husbands who will last well: you do not know how to preserve yourselves any longer; even those who died only fifteen centuries ago are already no more than a handful of dust;—behold! my flesh is solid as basalt; my bones are bars of steel!

"I will be present on the last day of the world, with the same body and the same features which I had during my lifetime: my daughter Hermonthis will last longer than a statue of bronze.

"Then the last particles of your dust will have been scattered abroad by the winds; and even Isis herself,

who was able to find the atoms of Osiris, would scarce be able to recompose your being.

"See how vigorous I yet remain, and how mighty is my grasp," he added, shaking my hand in the English fashion with a strength that buried my rings in the flesh of my fingers.

He squeezed me so hard that I awoke, and found my friend Alfred shaking me by the arm to make me get up.

"O you everlasting sleeper!—must I have you carried out into the middle of the street, and fireworks exploded in your ears? It is after noon; don't you recollect your promise to take me with you to see M. Aguado's Spanish pictures?"

"God! I forgot all, all about it," I answered, dressing myself hurriedly: "we will go there at once; I have the permit lying there on my desk."

I started to find it;—but fancy my astonishment when I beheld, instead of the mummy's foot I had purchased the evening before, the little green paste idol left in its place by the Princess Hermonthis!

CIRCÉ

BY OCTAVE FEUILLET

As a writer of romance, Octave Feuillet holds an absolutely unique place. For thirty years he was the sole representative of that delicate, high-minded school of writing which owes to him, and to him alone, its rescue from the realistic deluge.

He wrote "The Romance of a Poor Young Man," "Julie de Trécœur," and a host of those exquisite "proverbes," like "Circé," that delighted with their delicacy of observation, the grace and spirit of their style; and yet Feuillet has a most exacting realism of his own, suave, urbane.

Octave Feuillet was born at Saint-Lô in 1821. His life was beautifully simple, coherent, and filled with work. He wrote many admirable plays, "Montjoye," "Dalila," and others, and a sketch, "Le Curé de Bourron," almost perfect in its art, drawn from his own observation as librarian at Fontainebleau. In 1862 he was elected to the Academy and in 1890 he died at Paris.

CIRCÉ[1]

A PARISIAN SCENE

BY OCTAVE FEUILLET

PERSONS

THE PRINCE, thirty years old.
THE COUNTESS, twenty-six years old.

SCENE—*The Countess's Boudoir.*

The Countess. How do you do, Prince?

Prince. What, not out? Ah, I am fortunate, upon my word!

Countess. But you wrote me that you would come—

Prince. I wrote you that, really? Ah, that's odd. Ah, ah, that is amusing! Madame, your mother is well?

Countess. Very well—a little tired, that's all—she's just going up to her room. But sit down.

Prince (*seating himself*). Do you know what brings me here?

Countess. What?

Prince. I come to ask your advice. Imagine that I dined at the Embassy. They got talking about little drawing-room comedies, about *proverbes* or parables,

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[1] Circe, according to Homer, was an enchantress who lived on the Island of Ææa surrounded by human beings whom she had transformed into wolves, lions, and swine.

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about those little things, you know, that they play at private theatricals, and of the difficulty one experiences in finding any that are not too hackneyed, that one has not seen everywhere, and that are agreeable.

Countess. Yes—and then?

Prince. Very well, then. I was in rather a good humor; the spirit was upon me to compose during the week one of those witty trifles. A wager, serious enough, in fact, was connected with it. Briefly, since yesterday I have been thinking, without boring myself about other matters.

Countess. And you have hit upon something?

Prince. I have not yet thought of anything. But it will come. I conceived the idea of talking it over with you. We will do the thing together, if you are quite willing. It is very easy, you will see.

Countess. But I don't know, for my part, that it is so very easy.

Prince. Positively. Nothing more simple. Will you try?

Countess. Mon Dieu, I should like to—but you must hold the pen.

Prince. That's understood.

Countess. There, there's paper and ink—blue ink; is that all right?

Prince. Blue ink will do no harm. (*Places himself at a centre-table.*) There! Sit down in front of me, like a muse, and let us begin without further ceremony, will you?

Countess. Very willingly—but it's rather embarrassing, it seems to me.

Prince. Not at all. It's very easy. Always the same thing: Two people who chat about the rain and about fine weather—more or less wittily, as it happens to come. Well, are you ready?

Countess. Yes, yes—go on.

Prince. First we must write down the persons: "The Count, the Countess ——," is it not?

Countess. Yes, of course—but is this to be a *proverbe?*

Prince. Yes, it's a *proverbe.*

Countess. But what *proverbe?* That must be decided first.

Prince. Oh! Mon Dieu, why? It's of no use—it will develop itself in time—it will evolve naturally from the conversation—it will be the finishing touch.

Countess. So be it. Go on.

Prince. "The Count, the Countess. First scene—" Well?

Countess. Hé!

Prince. What is it they say?

Countess. But what is the subject?

Prince. There is no subject! It is a witty trifle, I told you—a nothing—an improvisation without substance—a go-as-you-please conversation— I am not proposing that you should write "The Misanthrope," [2] remember.

Countess. Yet it is necessary to know what they are to talk about.

Prince. But about nothing—about trifles—you know how those things are!

[2] A comedy by Molière.

Countess. But, no, my dear Prince, I know nothing about it—and no more do you, so it would seem.

Prince. Come, chère madame, do not let us quarrel. We said, "The Count and the Countess," is it not so? They are in the country—and the Count is bored, I suppose—

Countess. Yes, that's new enough.

Prince. I do not say that it must be new, but at any rate it is a subject, since you must have one. So then, the Count is bored—and the Countess—the Countess—

Countess. Is bored too, perhaps?

Prince. It's an idea, and with that combination, too, may become original enough. They are both bored—Well, you see, chère madame, we are progressing. Let us pass on to the dialogue— That, that's the easiest— Once in the dialogue it will go by itself— "The Count—" The Count—he enters, doesn't he?

Countess. Quite right.

Prince. And in entering, he says—

Countess. He says?

Prince. What?

Countess. I am asking you.

Prince. Well—he might say, for instance, "Always alone, dear Countess?"

Countess. I see nothing inappropriate in that.

Prince. It's sufficiently the phrase of a bored man —"Always alone, dear Countess?"

Countess. It's a charming phrase— To which the Countess, who is always alone, replies?

Prince. Wait—yes—perhaps—that is to say, no —that will not do.

Countess. Instead of entering the diplomatic service you ought to devote yourself to literature—with your facility.

Prince (*rising*). It is certain that I am too beastly stupid—dumb as an animal— And then I am thinking of something else— Oh, well, I am going!

Countess. No!

Prince. I assure you that at other times I had a sort of wit— Inquire at the Embassy—they know— But I am altogether changed— Good night, I am going.

Countess. No!

Prince. I am not going?

Countess. No, I tell you!

Prince. So be it. (*He sits down again.*)

Countess. Let us return. Where were we?— "The Count, the Countess—"

Prince. The truth is you ought to consider me a regular imbecile.

Countess. Is it the Count says that?

Prince. No, it is I.

Countess. Not at all—I find you only a little odd.

Prince. Odd! You are very kind— But no, really; I beg of you to inquire at the Embassy— they will tell you that I do not lack intelligence, and that at other times I had even a sort of inspiration.

Countess. But, my Prince, I have no need to inquire at the Embassy, I have only to remember. I have

known you to be extremely brilliant, several months ago when you were making love to me.

Prince. Brilliant, no; but I was as good as another at any rate.

Countess. Yes, yes, I insist— You were a brilliant young man, sparkling, dreadful!— (*She rubs her hands softly.*)

Prince. You are making fun of me— I was not sparkling, but I had some vivacity—and that was but two years ago! It is true that I had only just arrived at Paris,—and that I had not yet passed under the influence of the climate.

Countess. You believe it was the climate—

Prince. What will you have? It must assuredly have been something— It isn't age— I am not thirty years old— At any rate, I think I shall leave Paris, and diplomacy as well— My mother sends for me from Vienna— I received a letter from her this morning— I wanted, also, to show it to you—

(*He fumbles about in his coat pocket and pulls out a letter half-tangled in some black lace.*)

Countess. What lace is that coming out of your pocket?

Prince (*confused*). Lace? Oh! Do you see some lace?

Countess. This— But I say, my Prince, is not this one of my veils, here?

Prince. One of your veils—here?— Are you sure?

Countess. Absolutely!— And I am going to take

it back, too, if you will allow me— That's lace of great price, if you have your doubts about it.

Prince. I implore you to believe, indeed, madame, that I did not attach a mercenary value to it. But how do I come to have that veil about me?

Countess. It is very easy to explain. I must have left it at the Embassy on a visit, they charged you to return it to me, and with your usual absent-mindedness, you forgot the commission.

Prince. That's simple. I ask ten thousand pardons. It is perfectly evident! You see I am not myself at all any more. All my faculties—even my memory—are weakening. It is high time I go to recover strength in my native air. You see what my mother tells me?

Countess (*running through the letter*). She has the air of a noble woman, your mother.

Prince. Yes. We two are very fond of each other. She advises me not to have too much success, poor mother! She believes me always irresistible.

Countess. Then you have been so, my prince?

Prince. Why, yes, a little, up to the day I had the honor of meeting you— Well, what do you advise me?

Countess. To go, since your mother wishes to see you again.

Prince. That's my advice, too, and to tell you the truth, I came this evening specially to bid you good-by.

Countess. What! to bid me good-by?— And that *proverbe?* What was the object of that joke?

Prince. That *proverbe?* Come, madame, I want the last impression you receive of me to be pleasant. You will laugh. Here is the history of that *proverbe.*

You remember well enough that which passed between us two years ago, after I had vainly offered you my heart and my hand. It so happened that if I wished to continue to regard you as a friend, I must sternly refrain from all allusions to a love definitely repulsed. I gave you my word on the matter, and I expected to have kept it scrupulously.

Countess. That is true.

Prince. Well, then, I made a mistake there. Excuse me, I swear to you that I am going. My discretion and my reserve naturally made you believe that I was cured of my love.

Countess. Naturally.

Prince. Yes. Well, it is a mistake. I love you always. I love you like a fool, like a child, like an angel, like a savage, as you will. Having decided to go away, I wished first to make one supreme effort, a desperate one. The idea of that *proverbe* came to me. Under cover of that *proverbe* I promised myself to set my feelings before you, with so much fire, emotion, eloquence, wit, that you would be infallibly softened, fascinated, and overcome. You have seen how successful I was!— Isn't it comic?— Now, madame, adieu.

Countess. Adieu, Prince.

Prince. One word more. Be gracious enough to tell me why you refused to marry me. My proposal was, in fact, perfectly honest and perfectly worthy of acceptance. Why did you repulse it with so much decision? Was it from caprice, from antipathy, or did you have some serious reason?

Countess. I had a serious reason.

Prince. You loved some one?

Countess. No one.

Prince. Then your heart was free, like your hand. You had not been, you told me so yourself, particularly happy with your husband—although he was charming, from what they say.

Countess. He was charming, altogether charming, sparkling and irresistible—like you—in days gone by.

Prince. In short, you were not happy; consequently, you had no occasion to torment yourself if you became unfaithful to the memory of the dead. As for me I had a brilliant name, a fortune, a position. At that time I was not ill and depressed as I am now. I was tolerable in my person.

Countess. Very handsome, indeed.

Prince. I passed for a sufficiently lively talker. I made court to you, if I remember, with—intelligence.

Countess. With much, much wit.

Prince. And you refused me!— Come, now, why?

Countess. You do not guess?

Prince. Not at all.

Countess (*she takes his hand and looks him tenderly in the eyes*). It is because I love dumb animals, my friend!

THE HANGING AT LA PIROCHE

BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS, FILS

Alexandre Dumas, the Younger, son of Alexandre Dumas, was born at Paris in 1824, and died at Marly-le-Roi in 1895. His first great success came to him in 1848, with "La Dame aux Camélias," the romantic story of a "woman with a past" reclaimed by love; afterward dramatized with such success that it decided his career. He still wrote novels and short stories, but without his father's imagination. He was elected an Academician in 1874.

The younger Dumas inherited a strong, good nature, weak enough to share in a few human vices, strong enough to combat them; he was a lover of order, elegance, and amateur in all arts but his own. Aiming at social and moral reformation, he was bold, logical, spiritual. By reason of his depth of background and knowledge of form, he ranks among the foremost of the nineteenth century dramatists.

THE HANGING AT LA PIROCHE

BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS, FILS

DO you know La Piroche?

No. No more do I. So I shall not abuse my privilege as an author by giving you a description; especially since, between you and me be it said, they are very tiresome, those descriptions. Unless it be a question of the virgin forests of America, as in Cooper, or of Meschacebé,[1] as in Chateaubriand, that is to say, countries that are not close at hand, and about which the imagination, to obtain a clear vision of the details, must be assisted by those poetical voyagers who have visited them, in general descriptions are not of much consequence except to be skipped by the reader. Literature has this advantage over painting, sculpture, and music; the threefold advantage of being able to paint by itself a picture in a single word, to carve a statue in one phrase, to mold a melody on one page; it must not abuse itself of that privilege, and one should leave to the special arts a little of their own prerogative. I own, then, for my part, and for lack of better advice, that when I find that I have to describe a country which every one has seen, or every one could see, if it be near, if it does not differ from our own, I prefer to leave to my reader the pleasure of recalling it if he has seen it, or of im-

[1] As the word "Mississippi" sounded to the French ear.

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agining it if he does not yet know it. The reader likes well enough to be left to do his share of the work he is reading. This flatters him and makes him believe that he is capable of doing the rest. Indeed, it is an excellent thing to flatter your reader. Moreover, the whole world in reality knows what the sea is like—a plain, a forest, a blue sky, an effect of sun, an effect of the moon, or an effect of storm. Of what use to dwell upon it? It would be far better to trace a landscape in one stroke of the brush like Rubens or Delacroix; this should be said without comparison and keep the whole value of your palette for the figures you wish to reanimate. When one blackens with descriptions page after page of paper, one doesn't give the reader an impression equal to that experienced by the most artless bourgeois who walks through the Bois de Vincennes on a soft April day, or by an unlettered girl who strolls in June, on the arm of her fiancé, at eleven o'clock at night through the shady vistas of the woods of Romainville or the park of Enghien. We all have in our minds and hearts a gallery of landscapes made from memory, and which serves as background for all the stories of the world. There is but one word to use—day or night, winter or spring, calm or storm, wood or plain—to evoke at once a most finished landscape.

So I have only to tell you this: that at the moment when the story I am about to tell you begins it is noon, that it is May, that the highway we are going to enter is bordered on the right with furze bushes, on the left by the sea; you know at once all that I have not told

you; that is to say, that the bushes are green, that the sea is murmuring, that the sky is blue, that the sun is warm, and that there is dust on the road.

I have only to add that this highway that winds along the coast of Brittany runs from La Poterie to La Piroche; that Piroche is a village about which I know nothing, but which must be more or less like all villages, that we are in the middle of the fifteenth century, in 1418, and that two men, one older than the other, one the father of the other, both peasants, are following the highway mounted on two nags trotting along comfortably enough for two nags under the weight of two peasants.

"Shall we get there in time?" said the son.

"Yes, it is not to take place until two o'clock," replied the father, "and the sun marks but a quarter after noon."

"Oh, but I am curious to see that!"

"I can well believe it."

"So he will be hanged in the armor that he stole?"

"Yes."

"How the devil did he get the idea of stealing armor?"

"It's not the idea that is hard to get—"

"It's the armor," interrupted the boy, who wanted his share in making a part of that joke.

"And that, too, he didn't get."

"Was it fine armor?"

"Splendid, they say, all shining with gold."

"And did they catch him as he was carrying it away?"

"Yes, you know as well as I do that armor like that never goes astray without raising a great outcry; it can't escape its proper owner all by itself."

"So, then, it was of iron?"

"They woke up in the château at the noise they heard."

"And did they arrest the man?"

"Not at once; they began by being afraid."

"Of course, it's always that way that people who have been robbed begin when they are in the presence of thieves; otherwise there would be no object in being a thief."

"No, nor any pleasant excitement in being robbed! But those brave folks had no idea that it was an affair of robbery."

"Of what, then?"

"Of a ghost. That wretched, most vigorous fellow was carrying the armor in front of him, holding his head at the height of the loins of said armor so effectively that he acquired gigantic proportions in the corridor where he passed. Add to this a clattering noise which the rascal made behind him, and you will appreciate the fright of the valets. But, unfortunately for him, he woke up the Seigneur of La Piroche, he who has fear of neither the dead nor the living, who easily, and all by himself, arrested the thief and handed him over, bound, to his well-deserved justice."

"And his well-deserved justice?"

"The condemned man is to be hanged clothed in the armor."

"Why that clause in the sentence?"

"Because the Seigneur of La Piroche is not only a brave captain, but a man of common sense and of spirit, who wished to draw from this just condemnation an example for others and an advantage for himself. Why, don't you know that whatever touches a hanged man becomes a talisman for him who possesses it? So the Seigneur of La Piroche has ordered that the thief should be hanged dressed in his armor, so as to reclaim it when the man is dead and have a talisman to wear during our next wars."

"That is very ingenious."

"I should think so."

"Let's make haste, for I am so anxious to see the poor man hanged."

"We have plenty of time! We must not wear our beasts out. We are not going to stop at La Piroche; we will have to go on a league farther, and then return to La Poterie."

"Yes, but our beasts will rest for five or six hours, for we do not return until evening."

The father and son continued on their way, talking, and half an hour later they reached La Piroche.

As the father had said, they arrived on time. Have fathers always the privilege of being right?

There was an immense concourse of people on the great square in front of the château, for it was there that the scaffold had been erected, a splendid gallows, in faith, of sound oak, not very high, it is true, since it was intended for a wretched, obscure criminal, but high enough, nevertheless, for death to do its work between earth and the end of the rope which was

swinging in the fresh sea breeze like an eel hanging by its tail.

The condemned man was certain of having a beautiful view at the moment of death, for he was to die with his face turned toward the ocean. If this view could be any consolation to him, so much the better, but, for my part, I doubt it.

And all the while the sea was blue, and from time to time between the azure of the sky and that of the sea floated a white cloud, like an angel on its way to heaven, but whose long robes still trailed upon the earth it was quitting.

The two companions approached as near as possible to the scaffold, so as to miss nothing that was going on, and, like all the rest, they waited, having this advantage over the others, that they were mounted on two nags and could see better with less fatigue.

They had not long to wait.

At a quarter of two the gates of the château opened, and the condemned man appeared, preceded by the guards of the Seigneur of La Piroche and followed by the executioner.

The thief was dressed in the stolen armor and was mounted reversed on the bare back of a jackass. He rode with vizor down and head lowered. They had tied his hands behind his back, and if they wish for our opinion in the matter we have no hesitation in saying that, judging by his position, in default of his face, which could not be seen, he ought to have been very ill at ease, and indulging at that moment in very sad reflections.

They conducted him to the side of the scaffold, and a moving picture hardly pleasant for him began to silhouette itself against the blue sky. The hangman set his ladder against the scaffold, and the chaplain of the Seigneur of La Piroche, mounted on a prepared platform, delivered the sentence of justice.

The condemned man did not move. One might have said that he had given the spectators the slip by dying before he was hanged.

They called to him to descend from his ass and deliver himself to the hangman.

He did not move. We understand his hesitation.

Then the hangman took him by the elbows, lifted him off the ass, and set him upright on the ground.

Fine fellow, that hangman!

When we say that he set him upright, we do not lie. But we would lie in saying that he remained as they placed him. He had in two minutes jumped two-thirds of the alphabet; that is to say, in vulgar parlance, that instead of standing straight like an I, he became zigzag like a Z.

During this time the chaplain finished reading the sentence.

"Have you any request to make?" he asked of the culprit.

"Yes," replied the unfortunate, in a voice sad and low.

"What do you ask?"

"I ask for pardon."

I do not know if the word "farceur" was invented

in those days, but then or never was the time to invent it and to speak it.

The Seigneur of La Piroche shrugged his shoulders and ordered the executioner to do his duty.

The latter made ready to mount the ladder leaning against the gibbet, which, impassive, was about to draw with extended arm the soul out of a body, and he attempted to make the condemned mount in front of him, but it was not an easy thing to do. One does not know, in general, what obstacles those condemned to death will put in the way of their dying.

The hangman and the man there had the air of passing civilities one to another. It was a question of who should go first.

The hangman, to make him mount on his ladder, returned to the method he employed in making him descend from his ass. He seized him around the middle of his body, balanced him on the third rung of the ladder, and began to push him up from beneath.

"Bravo!" cried the crowd.

He ought to have mounted well.

Then the executioner adroitly slipped the running noose, which adorned the end of the rope, around the neck of the culprit, and, giving the latter a vigorous kick in the back, he flung him out into space, which strongly resembled Eternity.

An immense clamor greeted this looked-for dénouement, and a shudder passed through the crowd. Whatever may be the crime he has committed, the man who dies is always at the moment greater than those who watch him die.

The hanged man swung for three or four minutes at the end of his rope, as he had a right to do, danced, wriggled, then hung motionless and rigid.

The Z had become an I again.

They gazed a while longer on the culprit, whose gilded armor glistened in the sun, then the spectators divided themselves, little by little, into groups, and went their way home, chatting about the event.

"Pooh! a horrid thing is death!" said the son of the peasant, as he continued his journey with his father.

"In good faith, to hang one for not having succeeded in stealing a piece of armor, that's expensive. What do you think?"

"I wonder, I do, what they would have done to him if he had really stolen the armor?"

"They would not have done anything to him, for if he had really stolen the armor he would have been able to escape from the château. Then, possibly, he would not have returned to be arrested."

"Yet he is punished more for a crime that he has not committed than he would have been if he had committed the crime!"

"But he had the intention of committing it."

"And the intention was accounted as a fact—"

"That is perfectly just."

"But it isn't pretty to look at."

And since they found themselves on rising ground, the two companions turned to contemplate for the last time the silhouette of the unfortunate.

Twenty minutes later they entered the little town where, save the mark! they were to receive certain

moneys, and which they were to leave that evening in order to accomplish the return home that same night.

On the morrow, at break of day, the guards sallied out from the château of La Piroche for the purpose of taking down the corpse of the hanging man, from which they intended to recover the armor of the Seigneur, but they discovered something which they had been far from anticipating, that is to say, the gibbet was there, as always, but the hanged man was not there.

The two guards rubbed their eyes, believing themselves to be dreaming, but the thing was very real. No more hanged man, and naturally no more armor.

And what was extraordinary, the rope was neither broken nor cut, but just in the condition it was before receiving the condemned.

The two guards ran to announce this news to the Seigneur of La Piroche. He was not willing to believe it, and proceeded to assure himself of the truth of the facts. So puissant a seigneur was he that he was convinced the hanged man would reappear for him there; but he saw what all the rest had seen.

What had become of the dead? For the condemned had certainly died the day before, before the eyes of the whole village.

Had another thief profited by the night to get possession of the armor that covered the corpse?

Possibly—but in taking the armor he would naturally leave the corpse, for which he had no use.

Had the friends or relations of the culprit wished to give him Christian burial?

Nothing impossible in that if it were not for the fact that the culprit had neither friends nor relations, and that people who had had religious sentiments like that would have taken the culprit and left the armor. That, then, was no longer to be thought of. What should one believe, then?

The Seigneur of La Piroche was in despair. He was all for his armor. He made promise of a reward of ten gold *écus* to any one who should deliver to him the thief, dressed as he was in dying.

They ransacked the houses; they found nothing.

No one presented himself.

They caused a sage of the town of Rennes to be sent for, and they propounded this question to him:

"In what way does a dead man who has been hanged manage to free himself from the rope that holds him in the air by the neck?"

The sage demanded eight days to ponder over the question, at the termination of which he replied:

"He can not do it."

Then they propounded this second question:

"A thief, unsuccessful in stealing while alive, and having been condemned to death for stealing, can he steal after his death?"

The sage replied:

"Yes."

He was asked how it could be done. He replied that he knew nothing about it.

He was the greatest sage of his time.

They sent him home and contented themselves with

believing, for those were the days of witchcraft, that the thief was a wizard.

Then they said masses to exorcise that evil spirit, which was without doubt taking his revenge upon the Seigneur who had ordered his death and upon those who had come to see him die.

A month passed in fruitless search.

The gibbet still stood there as always, humiliated, gloomy, and discredited. Never had a gibbet committed such a breach of confidence.

The Seigneur of La Piroche continued to clamor for his armor from man, God, and the devil.

Nothing.

At last he was beginning, without a doubt, to make the best of this strange event, and of the loss which had been the result, when one morning, as he was waking, he heard a great commotion on the square where the execution had taken place. He was making ready to inform himself of what was passing when his chaplain entered the room.

"Monseigneur," said he, "do you know what has happened?"

"No, but I am going to ask."

"I can tell you, I can."

"What is it, then?"

"A miracle from heaven!"

"Really!"

"The hanged man—"

"Well?"

"He is there!"

"Where?"

"On the scaffold."

"Hanging?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"In his armor?"

"In your armor."

"True, for it *is* mine. And is he dead?"

"Absolutely dead—only—"

"Only what?"

"Did he have spurs on when they hanged him?"

"No."

"Well, Monseigneur, he has them, and in place of having the casque on his head, he has placed it with great care at the foot of the gibbet, and left his head hanging uncovered."

"Let us see, Mr. Chaplain, let us see, straight off!"

The Seigneur of La Piroche ran to the square crowded with the curious. The neck of the hanged man had passed again into the running noose, the corpse was there at the end of the rope, and the armor was there on the corpse.

It was astounding. So they proclaimed it a miracle.

"He has repented," said one, "and has come to hang himself over again."

"He has been there all the time," said another; "only we did not see him."

"But why has he got spurs?" asked a third.

"No doubt, because he has come from afar and wished to return in a hurry."

"I know well, for my part, that far or near, I would not have needed to put on spurs, for I would not have come back."

And they laughed, and they stared at the ugly face the dead man made.

As for the Seigneur of La Piroche, he thought of nothing but of making sure that the thief was quite dead, and of securing his armor.

They cut down the corpse and stripped it; then, once despoiled, they hung it up again, and the ravens investigated so thoroughly that at the end of two days it was all jagged, at the end of eight days it had only the appearance of a rag, and at the end of fifteen days it had no longer the appearance of anything at all; or, if it did resemble anything, it was only those impossible hanged men we used to make pictures of on the first page of our text-book, and below which we wrote the amphibious quatrain, half Latin, half French:

Aspice Pierrot pendu,
Qui nunc librum n'a pas rendu,
Si hunc librum reddidisset:
Pierrot pendu *non-faisset.*[2]

But what had the hanged man been doing during his month of absence? How did it happen that he escaped, and, having escaped, that he hanged himself again?

We will give below the three versions which have been presented to us.

A magician, a pupil of Merlin, declared that if at the moment of dying the culprit has had the will to disap-

[2] Behold Pierrot suspendered,
Who has not his Latin rendered.
But 'twas otherwisely fated:
Pierrot was the one translated.

pear and the ability to absorb his body into his will, the will being an immaterial thing, invisible, and impalpable, the body, which finds itself absorbed by it, and consequently hidden in it, becomes by that means also impalpable, immaterial, and invisible, and that if the body of a thief has reappeared at the end of a month, and at the end of a rope, it is because at that supreme moment his will, troubled by his conscience, has not had sufficient force for eternal absorption.

This may not be a good version, but it is one.

The theologians affirm that the culprit did succeed in vanishing, but that, pursued by remorse and being in haste to reconcile himself with God, he could not endure the life longer than one month, and, full of repentance, came to execute upon himself that justice which he had escaped the first time.

That, perhaps, is not the true version, but it is always Christian logic, and as a Christian we will not dismiss it altogether.

Finally, they declared that our two peasants in returning home that evening, and passing close to the gibbet, heard lamentations, a rattling, and something like a prayer; that they piously crossed themselves and demanded what was the matter; that they received no reply, but the lamentations continued, and it seemed to them that they came from the corpse that was above their heads. Then they took the ladder that the hangman had left at the foot of the scaffold, rested it against the arm of the gibbet, and the son, having mounted to the level of the condemned, said to him:

"Is it you who are making these complaints, poor man?"

The condemned gathered all his strength together and said:

"Yes."

"Then you are still alive?"

"Yes."

"You repent of your crime?"

"Yes."

"Then I will loosen you, and since the Evangelist commands us to give succor to those who suffer, and that you suffer, I am going to succor you and bring you to life in order to bring you to good. God prefers a soul that repents to a corpse that expiates."

Then the father and the son cut down the dying man, and saw how it was that he still lived. The rope, instead of tightening about the neck of the thief, had tightened at the base of the casque so effectually that the culprit was suspended but not strangled, and, occupying with his head a kind of vantage-point in the interior of the casque, he was able to breathe and to keep alive up to the time our two companions passed by.

The latter took him down and carried him home with them, where they gave him into the care of the mother and the young daughter.

But he who has stolen will steal.

There were but two things to steal at the peasant's, for the money he had brought back with him was not in his house. These two things were his horse and his daughter, a fair-haired girl of sixteen.

The ex-hanged decided to steal both the one and the other, for he was covetous of the horse and had fallen in love with the daughter.

So one night he saddled the horse, buckled on the spurs to make him ride faster, and went to take the young girl while she was asleep, and lift her up on to the crupper.

But the girl awoke and cried out.

The father and the son came running up. The thief tried to escape, but he was too late. The young girl told about the attempt of the hanged man; and the father and the son, seeing well that no repentance was to be expected from such a man, resolved to execute justice upon him, but more effectually than the Seigneur of La Piroche had allowed himself to do it. They bound the thief to the horse which he had saddled himself, led him to the square of La Piroche, and strung him up there where he had been hanged, but placed his casque on the ground to make sure that he should not vanish again; then they returned home quietly.

There is the third version. I do not know why I believe it to be the most probable, and that you would do well, like me, to give it preference over the other two.

As for the Seigneur of La Piroche, as soon as he had secured a real talisman, he went happily off to the wars, where he was the first to be killed.

THE DEAN'S WATCH

BY ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN

Émile Erckmann, born 1822, died 1899, and Alexandre Chatrian, born 1826, died 1890, natives of Alsace-Lorraine, formed a literary partnership in 1847 and wrote many charming novels and plays, such as "The Famous Doctor Mathéus," followed by "L'ami Fritz" (the source of Mascagni's opera of the same name). All these, appearing under the signature of Erckmann-Chatrian, were supposed to be the productions of a single writer until 1863, when the collaboration was announced. It is said that their first stories were rejected by all the newspapers of Paris. This combined authorship has produced a style noted for its familiar, picturesque simplicity, its candor and hearty good-fellowship, and its democratic feeling. They have been accused of warring against war and thus weakening patriotism, but it is only against those wars raised by despots in endeavoring to choke the development of political liberty.

THE DEAN'S WATCH

BY ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN

ON the day before Christmas of the year 1832, my friend Wilfred, with his double-bass slung over his back, and I, with my violin under my arm, started to walk from the Black Forest to Heidelberg. It was unusually snowy weather; as far as we could see across the great, deserted plain, there was no trace of road nor path. The wind kept up its harsh aria with monotonous persistency, and Wilfred, with his flattened wallet at his belt, and the vizor of his cap drawn over his eyes, moved on before me, straddling the drifts with his long, heron legs, and whistling a gay tune to keep up his spirits. Now and then, he would turn around with a waggish smile, and cry: "Comrade, let's have the waltz from 'Robin,' I feel like dancing." A burst of laughter followed these words, and then the good fellow would resume his march courageously. I followed on as well as I could, up to my knees in snow, and I felt a sense of melancholy take possession of me.

The spires of Heidelberg began to appear on the extreme horizon, and we hoped to reach there before nightfall. It was then about five o'clock in the afternoon, and great flakes of snow were whirling through

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the gray atmosphere. Suddenly we heard the sound of a horse approaching from behind us. When the rider was within twenty yards of us, he moderated his speed, studying us meanwhile with a sidelong glance. We returned his gaze.

Picture to yourself a large man, with reddish hair and beard, in a three-cornered hat and loose fox-skin pelisse; his arms buried to the elbows in fur gloves. He carried a handsome valise behind him, resting on the haunches of his powerful stallion. He was evidently some alderman or burgomaster or personage of like importance.

"Ho! Ho! my good fellows!" he cried; "you are on your way to Heidelberg to perform, I see." Wilfred surveyed the traveler from the corner of his eye, and replied briefly: "Is that of any interest to you, sir?" "Yes, for in that case I wish to give you a bit of advice." "Advice?" "Precisely; if you wish it." Wilfred started on without replying. I noticed that the traveler's appearance was like that of an enormous cat; his ears wide apart, his eyelids half closed, with a bristling mustache, and a fatherly, almost caressing manner. "My friend," he continued, addressing himself to me, "frankly, you will do well to retrace your steps." "Why so, sir?" "The great Maestro Pimenti has just now announced a concert to take place at Heidelberg on Christmas day. The entire city will be there, and you will not earn a kreutzer." At this point, Wilfred turned around ill-humoredly: "We care not a sou for your Maestro nor all the Pimentis in Christendom," he said; "look at this young fellow here,

without even the sign of a beard on his chin! He has never yet played outside of the ale-houses of the Black Forest, for the woodcutters and charcoal-women to dance; and yet this boy, with his long yellow curls and big blue eyes, defies all your Italian impostors. His left hand is possessed of inimitable melody, grace, and suppleness, and his right of a power to draw the bow, that the Almighty rarely accords us mortals."

"Oh! ho! Indeed!" returned the other. "It is just as I tell you," Wilfred replied, and he resumed his pace, blowing on his fingers that were red with the cold. I saw that he was ridiculing the horseman, who continued to follow us at an easy trot. We continued thus for a full half mile in silence. Suddenly the stranger said to us abruptly: "Whatever skill you may possess, go back to the Black Forest; we have vagabonds enough in Heidelberg without you to increase the number. I give you good advice, particularly under the existing circumstances; you will do well to profit by it."

Wilfred, now thoroughly out of patience, was about to reply, but the traveler, urging his horse into a gallop, had already crossed the broad Avenue d'Electeur. An immense flock of crows flew up from the plain and seemed to be following him, filling the heavens with their cawing. We reached Heidelberg at about seven o'clock, and we did indeed see Pimenti's magnificent posters on all the walls of the city, which read: "Grand Concert Solo."

That same evening in visiting the various inns, we

met many old comrades from the Black Forest, who engaged us to play in their troupe. There was old Bremer, the 'cellist, his two sons, Ludwig and Karl, both good second violins; Heinrich Siebel, the clarionet player, and Bertha with her harp; Wilfred with his double-bass and I with my violin made up the number. We agreed to travel together after the Christmas concert and divide the proceeds among us. Wilfred had already hired a room for us both on the sixth floor of the Pied de Mouton Tavern, which stood half-way down the Holdergrasse, and for it he was to pay four kreutzers a day. Properly speaking, it was nothing but a garret, but fortunately there was a stove in it, and we lighted a fire to dry ourselves.

As we were comfortably seated, toasting chestnuts over the fire and enjoying a jug of wine, little Annette, the housemaid, appeared in a black calico dress and velvet turban, with rosy cheeks and lips like a cluster of cherries. She came running up the stairs, gave a hasty knock and threw herself joyfully into my arms. I had known the pretty little girl for a long time; we were of the same village, and if truth must be told, her sparkling eyes and frolicsome ways had quite won my heart. "I came up to have a little talk with you," she said, dropping into a chair. "I saw you come up a moment ago and here I am."

She began to chatter away, asking for this one or that one of the village and hardly giving me time to reply. Every now and then she would pause and look at me with the greatest tenderness. We might have continued thus until the next morning had not Dame

Grédel Dick begun to call from the foot of the stairs: "Annette! Annette! Are you never coming?" "Right away, ma'am!" answered the poor child reluctantly. She tapped me lightly on the cheek and ran toward the door; but just as she was crossing the threshold, she suddenly stopped. "By the way," she cried, "I was forgetting to tell you; but perhaps you have heard about it?" "About what?" "The death of our precentor, Zahn." "But how does that affect us?" "To be sure; only see that your passport is all right. Tomorrow morning at eight o'clock they will come to examine it. Everybody is being arrested in the last fortnight. The precentor was assassinated last night in the library of Saint Christopher's Chapel, and only a week ago, old Ulmet Elias, the sacrificer, was similarly murdered in the Rue des Juifs. Some days before that Christina Hâas, the old midwife, was also killed, as well as the agate dealer Seligmann of the Rue Durlach. So look out for yourself, dear Kasper, and see that your passport is all right."

While she was speaking, Dame Grédel's voice came again from below: "Annette! will you come here? The good-for-nothing child, leaving me to do all the work!"

And the sound of men's voices calling for wine, beer, ham, or sausages mingled with her own. Further delay was out of the question. Annette hastened down the stairs, crying as she went: "Goodness, ma'am! what has happened? One would think that the house were afire!" Wilfred crossed the room and closed the door behind her; then returning to his

chair, we looked at each other, not without a feeling of apprehension.

"That is singular news," he said; "your passport is all right, I suppose?" "Certainly." And I produced my papers. "Good! Mine is too, for I had it made out just before leaving. But nevertheless, these murders do not augur us any good. I am afraid we shall not be able to do much business here; many of the families will be in mourning; and then, too, the bother and pettifogging of the authorities." "Pshaw! you take too gloomy a view of it," I replied.

We continued to discuss these singular happenings until after midnight. The glow from our little stove lighted up the angle of the roof, the square window with its three cracked panes, the straw strewn about the floor, the blackened beams propped against each other, and the little firwood table that cast its uncertain shadow upon the worm-eaten ceiling. From time to time, a mouse, enticed by the warmth, would dart like an arrow along the wall. The wind howled in the chimney and whirled the snow about the gutters. I was dreaming of Annette; the silence was complete. Suddenly Wilfred exclaimed, throwing off his jacket: "It is time for sleep. Put another stick on the fire and we will go to bed!" "We can't do better than that," I replied. So saying, I drew off my boots, and a moment later we were stretched out on the straw with the coverlid tucked under our chins and a log under our heads for a pillow. Wilfred lost no time in getting to sleep. The light from the stove flickered and trembled; the wind redoubled its force outside,

and as I lay thus with a sense of perfect contentment, I, too, dozed off. At about two o'clock in the morning I was awakened by a strange noise. I thought at first that it was a cat running along the gutter, but, putting my ear to the wall, my uncertainty was at once dispelled; somebody was walking on the roof. I nudged Wilfred. "Sh!" he whispered, pressing my hand; he had heard it, too. The firelight was casting its last shadows on the decrepit walls. I was considering whether I would get up or not, when the little window, held only by a bit of brick, slowly opened. A pale face with shining eyes, red hair, and quivering cheeks appeared in the opening and gazed into the interior of the chamber. Our fear was so great that we hadn't strength left to cry out. At length the man glided through the sash and let himself down into the loft without a sound. The man, short and thick-set, the muscles of his face contracted like a tiger about to spring, was none other than the ingenuous person who had volunteered his advice on the road to Heidelberg. But how different he seemed to us now! In spite of the bitter cold, he was in his shirt sleeves, dressed only in a pair of breeches, woolen stockings, and silver buckled shoes. A long, blood-stained knife glittered in his hand.

Wilfred and I thought our last hour had surely come. But he did not appear to see us in the oblique shadow of the loft, notwithstanding that the fire started up again in the cold draft from the open window. He squatted down on a chair and began to shiver in a strange manner. Suddenly he fixed his

yellowish-green eyes upon me; his nostrils dilated and he watched me for a full minute, while the blood froze in my veins. Then turning toward the stove, he gave a hoarse cough, like the purring of a cat, without moving a muscle of his face. He drew a large watch from his breeches pocket, made a gesture as if looking at the time, and either inadvertently or purposely laid it on the table. This done, he rose as if undecided, looked doubtfully at the window, hesitated, and finally disappeared through the door, leaving it wide open behind him. I sprang up to turn the lock; already the man's footsteps creaked on the staircase two floors below. An irresistible curiosity asserted itself over my fear, and hearing a window open, which looked upon the court, I approached the sash of the little winding staircase on the same side of the house. The courtyard, from where I stood, lay at a dizzy depth, and a wall from fifty to sixty feet high divided it. On the right of the wall was the yard of a pork butcher; on the left, the inn yard of the Pied de Mouton. The top of this wall, which was overgrown with damp mosses and that sort of vegetation that thrives in dark places, extended in a straight line from the window, which the man had just opened, to the roof of a large, sombre-looking dwelling, built in the rear of the Bergstrasse.

I took all this in at a glance while the moon shone between the heavy, snow-laden clouds, and I shuddered as I saw the man flee along the wall, his head bent forward and the knife still in his hand, while the wind howled lugubriously around him. He reached

the opposite roof and disappeared. I thought I must be dreaming. For some moments I stood there, open-mouthed with wonder, my breast bare, and hair tossed about, drenched by the sleet that fell from the roof. At length recovering from my bewilderment, I returned to the loft and found Wilfred, who looked at me with a haggard expression and was mumbling a prayer. I hastened to bolt the door, dress myself, and replenish the fire.

"Well," said my comrade, sitting up. "Well," I rejoined, "we have escaped this time, but if that fellow didn't see us, it was only because our time has not yet come." "You are right!" he cried. "He is one of the murderers Annette spoke of. Great Heavens! What a face! And what a knife!" And he fell back on the straw.

I emptied at a draft what wine still remained in the jug, and then, as the fire started up again, diffusing a grateful warmth through the chamber, and the lock appeared sufficiently strong, my courage began to revive. But the watch was still there and the man might return for it. The thought filled us with horror.

"Well, what is our next move?" asked Wilfred. "The best thing we can do is to strike out at once for the Black Forest." "Why so?" "I have no further desire to figure on the double-bass; you may do as you like." "Why should we leave? We have committed no crime." "Speak low!" he replied, "that one word 'crime' might hang us. We poor devils are made to serve as examples for others. They don't bother their heads much to find out whether we are guilty or not.

If they should discover that watch here, it would be enough." "Look here, Wilfred! It won't do to lose your head! A crime has undoubtedly been committed in this neighborhood, but what should honest men do under the circumstances? Instead of running away from Justice, they should try to aid it." "How aid it?" "The simplest way would be to take this watch to the bailiff and tell him what has passed." "Never! I wouldn't even dare to touch it!" "Very well, I will take it myself, but now let's go back to bed and try to get some more sleep if we can." "I don't care to sleep." "Well, light your pipe, then, and we will talk while we wait for daylight. Let's go downstairs, there may be some one there still." "I would rather stay here." "All right." And we sat down again before the fire.

As soon as dawn appeared, I took the watch from the table. It was a fine one with minute and second hands. Wilfred seemed somewhat reassured. "Kasper," he said, "on second thoughts, it seems more suitable for me to go to the bailiff. You are too young to take part in such matters. You would make a mess of it when you tried to explain the affair." "Just as you like," I replied. "Yes, it would look odd for a man of my years to send a mere child in my place." "Very good; I understand."

He took the watch, but I believe that only his pride drove him to this resolution. He would have been ashamed to show less courage than I before his comrades. We went down from the loft in a thoughtful mood. As we crossed the alleyway that comes out

on the Rue Saint Christopher, we heard the clicking of glasses. I recognized the voice of old Bremer and his sons, Ludwig and Karl. "By Jove," said I, "it wouldn't be a bad idea to take a glass before we start." I pushed open the door of the tap-room as I spoke, and we found all our company gathered there, their instruments variously deposited about the room. We were received with shouts of satisfaction and places were quickly made for us at the table. "Ho! Good morning, comrades," said Bremer; "more snow and wind. All the taverns are full of people, and every bottle that is opened means a florin in our pockets." I saw little Annette looking as fresh and fair as a rose, and smiling fondly at me with her lips and eyes. This sight reanimated me. It was I who got the daintiest morsels, and whenever she approached to set a glass of wine at my elbow, she touched me caressingly on the shoulder, and I thought, with a beating heart, of the days when we used to go chestnutting together. But in spite of this, the pale face of our strange visitor of the night before recurred to me from time to time, and made me tremble. I looked at Wilfred; he, too, seemed thoughtful.

Eight o'clock came and our party was about to start out, when the door was thrown open, and three big fellows, with lead-colored complexions, their eyes shining like rats, and their hats awry, appeared on the threshold, followed by several others of a like description. One of them, with a razor-back nose, and with a heavy club bound to his wrist, stepped forward, crying: "Your passports, gentlemen!" Each one has-

tened to comply with the request. Unfortunately, Wilfred, who stood near the stove, was seized with a sudden trembling. The officer's experienced eye detected his agitation, and as he paused in his reading to give him a questioning look, my comrade conceived the unlucky idea of slipping the watch into his boot; but before it had reached its destination, the official slapped his hand against the other's hip, and said jeeringly: "Something seems to trouble you here." To everybody's amazement, Wilfred was seized with a fainting spell and dropped upon a bench pale as death. Without further ceremony, Madoc, the Chief of Police, pulled up his trousers' leg and drew out the watch with a burst of evil laughter. He had no sooner glanced at it, however, than he became sober, and, turning to his men, he cried in a terrible voice: "Let no one leave the room! We have caught the whole band at last! Look! this is the watch of Dean Daniel Van den Berg. Bring hither the handcuffs!" This order chilled us to the marrow. A tumult followed, and I, believing that we were lost, slid under a bench near the wall. As I was watching them chain the hands of poor old Bremer and his sons, Karl and Ludwig, together with Heinrich and Wilfred, I felt Annette's little hand brush against my cheek and she drew me gently toward her—slowly and quietly toward the open cellar door. I was unnoticed in the general confusion; I slipped within; the door closed behind me. It was but the matter of a second. Scarcely had I concealed myself, before I heard my poor comrades depart; then all became silent.

I will leave you to imagine the nature of my reflections during an entire day, crouched down behind a wine cask with my legs gathered under me, and realizing that if a dog should enter the cellar, if the landlady should take the notion to come downstairs to fill a pitcher, if the cask should run out before night and were to be replaced; in short, if the slightest thing went amiss, it would be all up with me. All these thoughts and a thousand others passed through my mind, and I fancied that I already saw my comrades being led to execution. Little Annette, no less anxious than myself, closed the door prudently each time that she came up from the cellar. At last, I heard the old woman cry: "Leave the door open! Are you mad to lose half your time in shutting it?" After that the door remained ajar, and from my nook in the shadows I could see the tables gradually filling with new customers.

Stories, discussions, and exclamations concerning the famous band of robbers reached my ears. "Oh! the rascals!" cried one; "thank Heaven they are caught. What a scourge they have been to Heidelberg! No one dared risk himself in the streets after ten o'clock, and even business was beginning to suffer; but now things are changed and in a fortnight it will all be forgotten."

"Those musicians of the Black Forest are a lot of bandits!" chimed in another; "they make their way into the houses under pretext of playing, and meanwhile they are examining the locks, bolts, chests, and windows, and some fine morning we hear that such a

one has had his throat cut in his bed; that his wife has been murdered, his children strangled, and his house rifled from top to bottom. The wretches should be strung up without mercy! Then we might have some peace." "The whole village will turn out to see them hanged," said Mother Grédel, "and as for me, it will be the happiest day of my life." "Do you know, if it hadn't been for Dean Daniel's watch, no trace of them would have been found. Last night the watch disappeared, and this morning the Dean notified the police. An hour later, Madoc bagged them all! Ha! Ha! Ha!" The entire roomful burst out laughing, and I trembled with shame, indignation, and fear in turn.

Meanwhile, the night drew on. Only a few loungers remained. The people of the inn, who had sat up the night before, were anxious to get to bed. I heard the landlady yawn and mutter: "Oh, dear! How long before we can get some sleep?" Most of the tipplers comprehended the force of this remark and withdrew; only one remained, sitting half asleep before his glass. The watchman, going his rounds, woke him up and he went off grumbling and staggering.

"At last!" I said to myself; "this is good luck; Mother Grédel has gone to bed and Annette will not be slow in getting me out." With this agreeable prospect in view, I had already stretched out my stiffened limbs, when Dame Grédel's voice reached my ear: "Annette, go and lock up, and don't forget to bolt the door! I am going down cellar." It appeared that this was a wise custom of hers to assure herself that

everything was right. "But, madame," stammered the girl, "the cask isn't empty. You needn't bother to—" "Mind your own business," interrupted the mistress, whose candle was already lighting up the passageway. I had barely time to squat down again behind the cask, when the old woman, stooping beneath the low, dingy ceiling, passed from one keg to another, mumbling as she went: "Oh! the little wretch! How she lets the wine leak. I'll teach her to close the spigots tighter; did ever any one see the like?" The candle threw great shadows against the damp wall. I huddled closer and closer. Suddenly, just as I thought the visit happily ended, and was beginning to breathe easier again, I heard the old creature give a sigh so long and so full of wo that I knew something unusual was happening. I risked just the least glance, and I saw Dame Grédel Dick, her under jaw dropped and her eyes sticking out of her head, staring at the bottom of the barrel behind which I lay. She had caught sight of one of my feet underneath the joist that served as a wedge to keep the cask in place. She evidently believed she had discovered the chief of the robbers concealed there for the purpose of strangling her during the night. I formed a sudden resolution. "Madame, for God's sake, have pity on me!" I cried: "I am—" Without looking at me, or listening to a word I said, she set up an ear-splitting shriek and started up the stairs as quickly as her great weight would permit. Seized with inexpressible terror, I clung to her skirt and went down on my knees. This only made matters worse. "Help! seize the assassin!

Oh, my God! release me! Take my money! Oh! Oh!"

It was horrible. In vain did I cry: "Only look at me, my dear madame; I am not what you think me!" She was beside herself with fear; she raved and screamed in such piercing tones that had we not been underground, the whole neighborhood would inevitably have been aroused. In this extremity, consulting only my rage, I overturned her, and gaining the door before her, I slammed it in her face, taking care to slip the bolt. During the struggle the candle had been extinguished and Dame Grédel was left in the dark. Her cries grew fainter and fainter. I stared at Annette, giddy, and with hardly strength enough left to stand. Her agitation equaled mine. We neither of us seemed able to speak, and stood listening to the expiring cries of the mistress, which soon ceased altogether. The poor woman had fainted.

"Oh! Kasper," cried Annette, wringing her hands, "what is to be done? Fly! fly! You may have been heard! Did you kill her?" "Kill her? I?" "I am so glad! But fly! I will open the door for you." She unbarred it, and I fled into the street, without stopping even to thank her; but I was so terrified and there was not a moment to lose. The night was inky black; not a star in the sky, and the street lamps unlighted. The weather was abominable; it was snowing hard and the wind howled dismally. Not until I had run for a good half-hour did I stop to take breath. You may imagine my horror when looking up I found myself directly opposite the Pied de Mouton

Tavern. In my terror I had run around the square a half dozen times for aught I knew. My legs felt like lead and my knees tottered under me.

The inn, but a moment before deserted, swarmed like a bee-hive, and lights danced about from window to window. It was evidently filled with the police. And now, at my wits' end, desperate, exhausted with cold and hunger, and not knowing where to find refuge, I resolved upon the strangest possible course. "By Jove," I said to myself, "as well be hanged as leave my bones on the road to the Black Forest." And I walked into the tavern with the intention of giving myself up to the officials. Besides the fellows with their cocked hats tilted rakishly over their ears, and the clubs fastened to their wrists, whom I had already seen in the morning, and who were now running here and there, and turning everything upside down, there was the bailiff, Zimmer, standing before one of the tables, dressed in black, with a grave air and penetrating glance, and near him the secretary Roth, with his red wig, imposing countenance, and large ears, flat as oyster shells. They paid no attention to my entrance, and this circumstance altered my resolution at once. I sat down in a corner of the room behind the big cast-iron stove, in company with two or three of the neighbors, who had run hither to see what was going on, and I ordered a pint of wine and a dish of sauerkraut. Annette came near betraying me. "Goodness!" she cried, "is it possible!" But one exclamation, more or less, in such a babel of voices possessed but little significance. It passed unnoticed, and, while I

ate with a ravenous appetite, I listened to the examination to which Dame Grédel was subjected as she lay back in a large armchair, her hair falling down and her eyes bulged out with fright. "How old did the man appear to be?" asked the bailiff. "Between forty and fifty, sir. He was an enormous man with black side whiskers, or maybe brown, I don't exactly remember, with a long nose and green eyes." "Did he have any birth-mark or scars?" "I don't remember any. He only had a big hammer and pistols." "Very good! And what did he say to you?" "He seized me by the throat, but fortunately I screamed so loud it frightened him, and I defended myself with my finger-nails. When any one tries to murder you, you fight hard for your life, sir." "Nothing is more natural or legitimate, madame. Take this down, Roth! The coolness of this good woman is truly remarkable." The rest of the deposition was in the same strain. They questioned Annette afterward, but she testified to having been so frightened that she could remember nothing.

"That will do," said the bailiff; "if we need anything further, we will return to-morrow morning." Everybody withdrew, and I asked Dame Grédel for a room for the night. So great had been her fear that she had not the slightest recollection of having seen me before. "Annette," said she, "Show the gentleman to the little room on the third floor. I can not stand on my legs. Oh! dear! what trials we have to bear in this world." She began to weep.

Annette, having lighted a candle, led me up to the

little chamber, and when we found ourselves alone, she cried innocently: "Oh! Kasper, Kasper! Who would have believed that you were one of the band! I can never console myself for having loved a robber!" "What! you, too, believe us guilty, Annette?" I exclaimed despairingly, dropping into a chair; "that is the last straw on the camel's back." "No! no! you can not be. You are too much of a gentleman, dear Kasper! And you were so brave to come back." I explained to her that I was perishing with cold and hunger, and that that was the only consideration which led me to return.

We were left to ourselves for some time; then Annette departed, lest she should arouse Madame Grédel's suspicions. Left to myself, after having ascertained that the windows were not approached by any wall, and that the sashes were securely fastened, I thanked God that I had thus far been brought safely through the perils which surrounded me, and then going to bed, I was soon fast asleep.

II

I got up at about eight o'clock the next morning. It was foggy and dark. As I drew aside the hangings of the bed, I noticed that the snow was drifted on a level with the windows; the sashes were all white. I began to reflect upon the sad condition of my companions; they must have suffered with the cold, particularly old Bremer and Bertha, and the idea filled me with sorrow. As I was reflecting thus, a strange

noise arose outside. It drew near the inn, and I sprang anxiously to the window to see if some new dangers were threatening. They were bringing the famous band of robbers to confront Dame Grédel Dick, who was not yet sufficiently recovered from her fright to venture out of doors. My poor comrades came down the street between a double file of police, and followed by a crowd of street urchins, who screamed and yelled like savages. It seems to me that I can still see that terrible scene: poor Bremer chained between his sons, Ludwig and Karl, Wilfred behind them, and Bertha bringing up the rear and crying piteously: "In the name of Heaven, my masters, have pity on a poor, innocent harpist! I kill? I steal? O God! can it be?" She wrung her hands distractedly. The others proceeded with bowed heads, their hair falling over their faces.

The crowd swarmed into the dark alleyway of the inn. The guards drove back the rabble, and the door was closed and barred. The eager crowd remained outside, standing ankle-deep in slush, with their noses flattened against the panes. A profound silence settled upon the house. Having by this time got into my clothes, I opened the door part way to listen, and see if it would be possible to escape from my unpleasant quarters. I heard the sound of voices and of people moving about on the lower floors, which convinced me that the passages were strongly guarded. My door opened on the landing, directly opposite the window through which the man had fled two nights before. I did not pay any attention to this circumstance at

first, but as I stood there I suddenly noticed that the window was open, and that there was no snow on the sill; approaching it, I saw fresh tracks along the wall. I shuddered. The man must have returned last night; perhaps visited the inn every night. It was a revelation to me, and at once the mystery began to clear up.

"Oh! if it were only true," I said to myself, "that fortune had placed the murderer's fate in my hands, my unhappy fellows would be saved!" And I followed with my eyes the footprints, which led with surprising distinctness to the opposite roof. At this moment some words fell on my ear. The door of the dining hall had just been opened to let in the fresh air, and I heard the following conversation: "Do you recall having taken part in the murder of Ulmet Elias on the twentieth of this month?" Some unintelligible words followed. "Close the door, Madoc!" said the bailiff; "the woman is ill." I heard no more. As I stood with my head resting against the balusters, a sudden resolution seized me. " I can save my comrades!" I exclaimed: "God has pointed out to me the means, and if I fail to do my duty, their blood will be upon my head. My self-respect and peace of mind will be forever lost, and I shall consider myself the most cowardly of wretches." It took me some time, however, to summon up resolution enough. Then I went downstairs and entered the dining-room.

"Did you ever see this watch before?" the bailiff was saying to Dame Grédel. "Do your best to remember!" Without waiting for her answer, I stepped forward and replied firmly: "That watch, bailiff? I

have seen it before in the hands of the murderer himself. I recognize it perfectly, and if you will only listen to me, I will agree to deliver the man into your hands this very night." Perfect stillness followed my bold declaration. The officials stared at each other, dumfounded; my comrades seemed to cheer up a bit. "I am the companion of these unfortunate people," I continued, "and I say it without shame, for every one of them is honest, even if he is poor, and there is not one among them capable of committing the crimes imputed to him."

Again silence followed. Dame Bertha began to weep quietly. At last the bailiff aroused himself. Looking at me sharply, he said: "Where do you pretend to deliver the assassin into our hands?" "Right here in this very house! And to convince you of it, I only ask for a moment's private conversation." "Let us hear what you have to say," he replied, rising. He motioned Madoc to follow us; the others remained. We left the room. I went hastily up the stairs, with the others at my heels. Pausing at the window on the third floor, I showed them the man's footprints in the snow. "Those are the murderer's tracks!" I said; "he visits this house every night. Yesterday he came at two in the morning; last night he returned, and he will undoubtedly be back again this evening."

The bailiff and Madoc examined the footprints without a word. "How do you know that these are the murderer's tracks?" asked the chief of police, doubtfully. Thereupon I told him of the man's appearance in our loft. I pointed out to them the little window

above us through which I had watched him as he fled in the moonlight, and which Wilfred had not seen, as he remained in bed. I admitted that it was mere chance that had led me to the discovery of the tracks made the night before.

"It is strange!" muttered the bailiff; "this greatly modifies the position of the accused. But how do you explain the presence of the robber in the cellar?" "That robber was myself." I now related briefly everything that had taken place from the time of my comrades' arrest until the moment of my flight from the inn. "That will do," said the bailiff; and, turning toward the chief of police, he added: "I must admit, Madoc, that the depositions of these musicians never seemed to me very conclusive of their guilt; moreover, their passports established an alibi difficult to controvert. Nevertheless, young man," turning to me, "in spite of the plausibility of the proofs you have given us, you must remain in our power until they are verified. Keep him in sight, Madoc, and take your measures accordingly." The bailiff descended the stairs thoughtfully, and, refolding his papers, he said, without continuing the examination: "Let the accused be taken back to the prison!" And with a scornful glance at the landlady, he departed, followed by the secretary. Madoc alone remained with two officials.

"Madame," he said to Dame Grédel, "maintain the strictest secrecy about what has happened, and give this brave young man the same room he occupied night before last." Madoc's look and emphasis admitted of no reply. Dame Grédel swore she would do whatever

was required of her if she could only be rid of the robbers! Madoc replied: "We shall stay here all day and to-night to protect you. Go about your work in peace, and begin by giving us some breakfast. My good fellow, you will give us the pleasure of dining with us?" My situation did not permit me to decline. I accepted accordingly, and we soon found ourselves seated before a leg of ham and a jug of Rhine wine. Other people arrived from time to time, and endeavored to elicit the confidence of Dame Grédel and Annette, but they maintained a discreet silence, for which they deserve no little credit. We spent the afternoon smoking our pipes and emptying our mugs; no one paid any attention to us.

The chief of police, in spite of his sallow face, piercing glance, pale lips, and sharp nose, was excellent company after a bottle or two; he told us some excellent stories, and at every word of his the other two burst out laughing. I remained gloomy and silent. "Come, my dear young fellow!" he said to me with a smile, "forget for a little the death of your respectable grandmother. Take a drop, and put your troublesome thoughts to flight."

Others joined in the conversation, and the time passed in the midst of tobacco smoke, the clinking of glasses, and the ringing of mugs. But at nine o'clock, after the watchman's visit, the expression of things changed. Madoc rose and said: "Well, my friends, let us proceed to business. Fasten the doors and shutters quietly! You, ladies, may go to bed!" His two tattered followers looked more like robbers themselves

than like props of law and order. Each drew a club with a knob of lead attached to one end, from his trousers' leg, and Madoc tapped his breast pocket to make sure that his pistol was there. This done, he bid me lead them to the loft. We climbed the stairs. Having reached the little room, where thoughtful little Annette had taken care to light a fire, Madoc, cursing between his teeth, hastened to throw water on the coals; then motioning to the pile of straw, he said to me: "You may go to sleep if you like."

He sat down, together with his two acolytes, at the end of the room close to the wall, and they put out the light. I lay down on the straw, breathing a prayer to the Almighty to send hither the assassin. After midnight the silence became so profound that you would never have suspected three men were there with wide-open eyes, on the alert for the slightest sound. The hours wore slowly away. I could not sleep. A thousand terrible ideas teemed in my brain. One o'clock—two o'clock—three o'clock struck, and nothing appeared. At three o'clock one of the officials stirred slightly. I thought the man had come at last. But again all was still. I began to think that Madoc would take me for an impostor, as he must be only too ready to do, and that in the morning things would fare badly with me; thus, instead of helping my companions, I should only be fettered with them.

The time seemed to me to pass very rapidly after three o'clock. I wished the night might last forever, that the only ray of hope might not be gone. I was starting to go over all these thoughts for the fiftieth

time, when, suddenly, without my having heard a sound, the window opened and two eyes glistened in the opening. Nothing stirred in the loft. "The others are asleep," I thought. The head remained in the opening, listening. The wretch seemed to suspect something. My heart galloped and the blood coursed through my veins. I dared not even breathe. A few moments passed thus. Then, suddenly, the man seemed to make up his mind. He let himself down into the loft with the same caution as on the preceding night. On the instant a terrible cry, short, piercing, blood-curdling, resounded through the house. "We've got him!"

The whole house shook from cellar to attic; cries, struggles, and hoarse shouts, coupled with muttered oaths, filled the loft. The man roared like a wild beast, and his opponents breathed painfully as they battled with his terrible strength. Then there was a crash that made the flooring creak, and I heard nothing more but a gritting of teeth and a rattle of chains. "A light here!" cried the formidable Madoc. And as the sulphur burned, illuminating the place with its bluish light, I vaguely distinguished the forms of the three officials kneeling above the prostrate man. One of them was holding him by the throat, another had sunk his knees into his chest, and Madoc encircled his wrists with handcuffs hard enough to crush them. The man, in his shirt sleeves as before, seemed inert, save that one of his powerful legs, naked from the knee to the ankle, raised up from time to time and struck the floor with a convulsive movement. His eyes were

literally starting from his head, and his lips were covered with a bloody foam. Scarcely had I lighted the taper when the officials exclaimed, thunderstruck: "Our Dean!" All three got up and stood staring at each other, white with astonishment. The bloodshot eyes of the murderer turned on Madoc. He tried to speak, and after a moment I heard him murmur: "What a terrible dream! My God, what a terrible dream!" Then he sighed and became motionless.

I approached to take a look at him. It was indeed the man who had given us advice on the road to Heidelberg. Perhaps he had had a presentiment that we would be the means of his destruction, for people do sometimes have these terrible forebodings. As he did not stir, and a tiny stream of blood flowed on the dusty floor, Madoc, rousing himself from his stupor, bent over him and tore away his shirt; we then saw that he had stabbed himself to the heart with his great knife. "Ho! ho!" cried Madoc, with a sinister smile, "our Dean has cheated the gallows. You others stay here while I go and notify the bailiff." He picked up his hat, that had fallen off during the mêlée, and left without another word. I remained opposite the corpse, with the two others.

The news spread like wildfire. It was a sensation for the neighborhood. Dean Daniel Van den Berg enjoyed a fortune and a reputation so well established that many people refused to believe in the abominable instincts which dominated him. The matter was discussed from every conceivable point of view. Some held that he was a somnambulist and irresponsible for

his acts; others that he was a murderer through love of blood, having no other possible motive for committing these crimes. Perhaps both were right, for it is an undeniable fact that moral being, will, soul, whatever name you choose to call it by, is wanting in the somnambulist. The animal nature left to itself naturally yields to the dictates of its pacific or sanguinary instincts. Be that as it may, my comrades were at once restored to liberty. Little Annette was quoted for a long time after as a model of devotion. She was even sought in marriage by the son of the burgomaster Trungott, a romantic youth, who will one day disgrace his family.

As for me, I lost no time in returning to the Black Forest, where, since that time I have officiated as leader of the orchestra at the Sabre Vert Tavern, on the road to Tubingen. If you should ever happen to pass that way, and my story has interested you, come in and see me. We will drink a bottle or two together, and I will relate to you certain details that will make your hair stand on end.

AT THE PALAIS DE JUSTICE

BY ALPHONSE DAUDET

Alphonse Daudet, best known among English-speaking people perhaps as author of the humorous "Tartarin de Tarascon," written in 1872, was born at Nîmes, 1840, and died at Paris, 1897. For such novels as "Sapho," "Sidonie," "Numa Roumestan," etc., he has been called a stern censor, unsparing in his exposition of, and satire on, the weakness and hypocrisy of human nature. But that he has a warm, sympathetic side to his nature, too, is plain enough in the following story, which, on the whole, is an almost perfect example of Daudet's art. Jules Claretie said of him that he was a "winged realist," with a lightness and depth of touch that yet never forgot the realities of life. He was subjective, not objective.

AT THE PALAIS DE JUSTICE

BY ALPHONSE DAUDET

I KNOW not if it be from lack of habit, but I can never enter the Palais de Justice without an uneasiness, an inexplicable heart pang. That grating, those great courts, that stone staircase so vast that every one mounts it in isolation, enveloped in his individual torment. The antiquity of the structures, the melancholy clock, the height of the windows, and also the mist of the quay, that moisture that clings to walls that skirt the water, all give you a foretaste of the neighboring prison. In the halls the impression is the same, or more vivid still, because of the peculiar company which peoples them, because of those long black robes which make the solemn gestures, because of those who accuse, and the unintelligible records, the eternal records spread out everywhere on the tables, carried under the arms in enormous bundles, overflowing—

There are great green doors, noiseless and mysterious, from whence escape—when they are ajar—gusts of voices severe or weeping, and visions of school benches, platforms black with caps, and great crucifixes leaning forward. Muskets ring out on the flags. Sinister rumblings of carriages pass shaking the arches. All these noises blended together are like a

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respiration, the panting breath of a factory, the apparatus of justice at work. And hearing this terrible machine at labor, one desires to shrink within himself, to dwindle for fear of being caught, even by a hair, in this formidable gearing which one knows to be so complicated, tenacious, destructive—

I was thinking of this the other morning, in going to see an examining magistrate before whom I had, in behalf of a poor devil, to recommend a stay of proceedings. The hall of witnesses, where I was waiting, was full of people, sheriff's officers, clerks engrossing behind a glass partition, witnesses whispering to each other in advance of their depositions, women of the people, impressive and garrulous who were telling the officers their entire lives in order to arrive at the affair that had brought them there. Near me, an open door lit the sombre lobby of the examining magistrate, a lobby which leads everywhere, even to the scaffold, and from which the prisoners issue as accused. Some of these unfortunates, brought there under a strong escort by way of the staircase of la Conciergerie, lay about on the benches awaiting their turn to be interrogated, and it is in this ante-chamber of the convict prison that I overheard a lovers' dialogue, an idyl of the faubourg, as impassioned as "l'Oarystis," but more heartbreaking— Yes, in the midst of this shadow, where so many criminals have left something of their shuddering, of their hopes, and of their rages, I saw two beings love, and smile; and however lowly was this love, however faded was this smile, the old lobby must have been as astonished by it as would a miry

and black street of Paris, if penetrated by the cooing of a turtle-dove.

. . . . . .

In a listless attitude, almost unconscious, a young girl was seated at the end of a bench, quiet as a working woman who waits the price of her day's labor. She wore the calico bonnet, and the sad costume of Saint-Lazare with an air of repose and of well-being, as though the prison régime were the best thing she had found in all her life. The guard, who sat beside her, seemed to find her much to his taste, and they laughed together softly. At the other end of the lobby, wholly in the shadow, was seated, handcuffs on wrists, the Desgrieux of this Manon. She had not seen him at first; but as soon as her eyes became accustomed to the darkness, she perceived him and trembled: "Why, that's Pignou—hé! Pignou!"—

The guard silenced her. The prisoners are expressly forbidden to talk to each other.

"Oh! I beg of you, only one word!" she said, leaning far forward toward the remotest part of the lobby.

But the soldier remained inflexible. "No—no—it can't be done—only if you have some message to give him, tell it to me, I will repeat it to him."

Then a dialogue was entered into between this girl and her Pignou, with the guard as interpreter.

Much moved, without heeding those about her, she began:

"Tell him I have never loved any one but him; that I will never love another in all my life."

The guard made a number of steps in the lobby, and redoubling his gravity as though to take from the proceeding all that was too kindly, he repeated: "She says she has never loved but you, and that she'll never love another."

I heard a grumbling, a confused stammering which must have been the response of Pignou, then the guard went back with measured step toward the bench.

"What did he say?" demanded the child all anxious, and as though waiting were too long: "Well, tell me what he said now?"

"He said he was very miserable!"—

Then, carried away by her emotion and the custom of the noisy and communicative streets, she cried out loud:

"Don't be weary, m'ami—the good days will come again!"

And in this voice, still young, there was something piteous, almost maternal. Plainly this was the woman of the people with her courage under affliction and her dog-like devotion.

From the depths of the lobby, a voice replied, the voice of Pignou, wine-soaked, torn, burned with alcohol:

"Va donc! the good days—I'll have them at the end of my five years."

He knew his case well, that one!—

The guards cried: "Chut!—Keep quiet!"— But too late.

. . . . . .

A door had opened, and the examining magistrate himself appeared on the sill.

Skull-cap of velvet, grizzled whiskers, mouth thin and evil, the eye scrutinizing, distrustful, but not profound, it was just the type of an examining magistrate, one of those men who thinks he has a criminal before him always, like those doctors of the insane who see maniacs everywhere. That one in particular had a certain way of looking at you, so annoying, and so insulting, that you felt guilty without having done anything. With one glance of the eye he terrified all the lobby: "What does all this noise mean?— Try to do your duty a little better," he said, addressing the guards. Then he closed his door with a sharp click.

. . . . . .

The municipal guard taken to task, red, mortified, looked around a moment for some one upon whom to lay the blame. But the little girl said nothing more, Pignou sat quiet on his bench— All at once he perceived me, and as I was at the door of the hall, almost in the lobby, he took me by the arm and jerked me around brutally.

"What are you doing there, you?"

BOUM-BOUM

BY ARSÈNE ARNAUD CLARETIE

Jules Claretie, as he is known in the literary world, was born at Limoges in 1840, and was educated at Paris, where in 1860 he adopted journalism for a living; contributed a great variety of papers to the journals, under his own name and under the various pseudonyms of Olivier de Salin, Candide, Perdican, etc. In 1885 he became administrator of the Comédie Française, and in 1888 Member of the French Academy. He was Anatole France's predecessor as editor of "Le Temps."

Claretie has written a great number of works, a "History of the Revolution 1870-1871," belles-lettres, biographies, criticism, etc. Among his novels may be mentioned the first, "Une Drôlesse," published in 1862; "Les Muscadins," "Monsieur le Ministre," which the author dramatized, and "L'Accusateur," 1897.

BOUM-BOUM

BY JULES CLARETIE

THE child was lying stretched out in his little, white bed, and his eyes, grown large through fever, looked straight before him, always with the strange fixity of the sick who already perceive what the living do not see.

The mother at the foot of the bed, torn by suffering and wringing her hands to keep herself from crying, anxiously followed the progress of the disease on the poor, emaciated face of the little being. The father, an honest workman, kept back the tears which burned his eyelids.

The day broke clear and mild, a beautiful morning in June, and lighted up the narrow room in the street of the Abessess where little François, the child of Jacques and Madeleine Legrand, lay dying. He was seven years old and was very fair, very rosy, and so lively. Not three weeks ago he was gay as a sparrow; but a fever had seized him and they had brought him home one evening from the public school with his head heavy and his hands very hot. From that time he had been here in this bed and sometimes in his delirium when he looked at his little well-blackened shoes, which his mother had carefully placed in a corner on a board, he said:

Translated by Mary Stuart Symonds. Copyright, 1891, by The Current Literature Publishing Company.

"You can throw them away now, little François' shoes! Little François will not put them on any more! Little François will not go to school any more—never, never!"

Then the father cried out and said: "Wilt thou be still!" And the mother, very pale, buried her blond head in his pillow so that little François could not hear her weep.

This night the child had not been delirious; but for the two days past the doctor had been uneasy over an odd sort of prostration which resembled abandon, it was as if at seven years the sick one already felt the weariness of life. He was tired, silent, sad, and tossed his little head about on the bolster. He had no longer a smile on his poor, thin lips, and with haggard eyes he sought, seeing they knew not what, something there beyond, very far off—

In Heaven! Perhaps! thought Madeleine, trembling.

When they wished him to take some medicine, some sirup, or a little soup, he refused. He refused everything.

"Dost thou wish anything, François?"

"No, I wish nothing!"

"We must draw him out of this," the doctor said. "This torpor frightens me!—you are the father and the mother, you know your child well— Seek for something to reanimate this little body, recall to earth this spirit which runs after the clouds!"

Then he went away.

"Seek!"

Yes, without doubt they knew him well, their François, these worthy people! They knew how it amused him, the little one, to plunder the hedges on Sunday and to come back to Paris on his father's shoulders laden with hawthorne— Jacques Legrand had bought some images, some gilded soldiers, and some Chinese shadows for François; he cut them out, put them on the child's bed and made them dance before the bewildered eyes of the little one, and with a desire to weep himself he tried to make him laugh.

"Dost thou see, it is the broken bridge— Tire tire tire!— And that is a general!— Thou rememberest we saw one, a general, once, in the Bois de Boulogne?— If thou takest thy medicine well I will buy thee a real one with a cloth tunic and gold epaulets— Dost thou wish for him, the general, say?"

"No," replied the child, with the dry voice which fever gives.

"Dost thou wish a pistol, some marbles—a cross-bow?"

"No," repeated the little voice, clearly and almost cruelly.

And to all that they said to him, to all the jumping-jacks, to all the balloons that they promised him, the little voice—while the parents looked at each other in despair—responded:

"No."—"No."—"No!"

"But what dost thou wish, my François?" asked the mother. "Let us see, there is certainly something thou wouldst like to have— Tell it, tell it to me! to me!—thy mother!" And she laid her cheek on the

pillow of the sick boy and whispered this softly in his ear as if it were a secret. Then the child, with an odd accent, straightening himself up in his bed and stretching out his hand eagerly toward some invisible thing, replied suddenly in an ardent tone, at the same time supplicating and imperative:

"I want Boum-Boum!"

Boum-Boum.

Poor Madeleine threw a frightened look toward her husband. What did the little one say? Was it the delirium, the frightful delirium, which had come back again?

Boum-Boum!

She did not know what that meant, and she was afraid of these singular words which the child repeated with a sickly persistence as if, not having dared until now to formulate his dream, he grasped the present time with invincible obstinacy:

"Yes, Boum-Boum! Boum-Boum! I want Boum-Boum!"

The mother had seized Jacques's hand and spoke very low, as if demented.

"What does that mean, Jacques? He is lost!"

But the father had on his rough, working man's face a smile almost happy, but astonished too, the smile of a condemned man who foresees a possibility of liberty.

Boum-Boum! He remembered well the morning of Easter Monday when he had taken François to the circus. He had still in his ears the child's outbursts of joy, the happy laugh of the amused boy, when the

clown, the beautiful clown, all spangled with gold and with a great gilded butterfly sparkling, many-colored, on the back of his black costume, skipped across the track, gave the trip to a rider or held himself motionless and stiff on the sand, his head down and his feet in the air. Or again he tossed up to the chandelier some soft, felt hats which he caught adroitly on his head, where they formed, one by one, a pyramid; and at each jest, like a refrain brightening up his intelligent and droll face, he uttered the same cry, repeated the same word, accompanied now and then by a burst from the orchestra: Boum-Boum!

Boum-Boum! and each time that it rang out, Boum-Boum, the audience burst out into hurrahs and the little one joined in with his hearty, little laugh. Boum-Boum! It was this Boum-Boum, it was the clown of the circus, it was this favorite of a large part of the city that little François wished to see and to have and whom he could not have and could not see since he was lying here without strength in his white bed.

In the evening Jacques Legrand brought the child a jointed clown, all stitched with spangles, which he had bought in a passageway and which was very expensive. It was the price of four of his working days! But he would have given twenty, thirty, he would have given the price of a year's labor to bring back a smile to the pale lips of the sick child.

The child looked at the plaything a moment as it glistened on the white cover of the bed, then said, sadly:

"It is not Boum-Boum!— I want to see Boum-Boum!"

Ah! if Jacques could have wrapped him up in his blankets, could have carried him to the circus, could have shown him the clown dancing under the lighted chandelier and have said to him, Look! He did better, Jacques, he went to the circus, demanded the address of the clown, and timidly, his legs shaking with fear, he climbed, one by one, the steps which led to the apartment of the artist, at Montmartre. It was very bold this that Jacques was going to do! But after all the comedians go to sing and recite their monologues in drawing-rooms, at the houses of the great lords. Perhaps the clown—oh! if he only would—would consent to come and say good-day to François. No matter, how would they receive him, Jacques Legrand, here at Boum-Boum's house?

He was no longer Boum-Boum! He was Monsieur Moreno, and, in the artistic dwelling, the books, the engravings, the elegance was like a choice decoration around the charming man who received Jacques in his office like that of a doctor.

Jacques looked, but did not recognize the clown, and turned and twisted his felt hat between his fingers. The other waited. Then the father excused himself. "It was astonishing what he came there to ask, it could not be—pardon, excuse— But in short, it was concerning the little one— A nice little one, monsieur. And so intelligent! Always the first at school, except in arithmetic, which he did not understand— A dreamer, this little one,

do you see! Yes, a dreamer. And the proof—wait—the proof—"

Jacques now hesitated, stammered; but he gathered up his courage and said bruskly:

"The proof is that he wishes to see you, that he thinks only of you, and that you are there before him like a star which he would like to have, and that he looks—"

When he had finished the father was deadly pale and he had great drops on his forehead. He dared not look at the clown who remained with his eyes fixed on the workman. And what was he going to say, this Boum-Boum? Was he going to dismiss him, take him for a fool and put him out the door?

"You live?" asked Boum-Boum.

"Oh! very near! Street of the Abessess!"

"Come!" said the other. "Your boy wants to see Boum-Boum? Ah, well, he is going to see Boum-Boum."

. . . . . .

When the door opened and showed the clown, Jacques Legrand cried out joyfully to his son:

"François, be happy, child! See, here he is, Boum-Boum!"

A look of great joy came over the child's face. He raised himself on his mother's arm and turned his head toward the two men who approached, questioning, for a moment, who it was by the side of his father; this gentleman in an overcoat, whose good, pleasant face he did not know. When they said to

him: "It is Boum-Boum!" he slowly fell back on the pillow and remained there, his eyes fixed, his beautiful large, blue eyes, which looked beyond the walls of the little room, and were always seeking the spangles and the butterfly of Boum-Boum, like a lover who pursues his dream.

"No," replied the child with a voice which was no longer dry, but full of despair, "no, it is not Boum-Boum."

The clown, standing near the little bed, threw upon the child an earnest look, very grave, but of an inexpressible sweetness.

He shook his head, looked at the anxious father, the grief-stricken mother, and said, smiling, "He is right, this is not Boum-Boum!" and then he went out.

"I can not see him, I will never see Boum-Boum any more!" repeated the child, whose little voice spoke to the angels. "Boum-Boum is perhaps there, there, where little François will soon go."

And suddenly—it was only a half-hour since the clown had disappeared—the door opened quickly, and in his black, spangled clothes, his yellow cap on his head, the gilded butterfly on his breast and on his back, with a smile as big as the mouth of a money-box and a powdered face, Boum-Boum, the true Boum-Boum, the Boum-Boum of the circus, the Boum-Boum of the popular neighborhood, the Boum-Boum of little François—Boum-Boum appeared.

Lying on his little white bed the child clapped his thin, little hands, laughing, crying, happy, saved, with a joy of life in his eyes, and cried "Bravo!" with his

seven-year gaiety, which all at once kindled up like a match:

"Boum-Boum! It is he, it is he, this time! Here is Boum-Boum! Long live Boum-Boum! Good-day, Boum-Boum."

And when the doctor came back, he found, seated by little François's bedside, a clown with a pale face, who made the little one laugh again and again, and who said to the child while he was stirring a piece of sugar into a cup of medicine:

"Thou knowest, if thou dost not drink, little François, Boum-Boum will not come back any more."

So the child drank.

"Is it not good?"

"Very good!—thanks, Boum-Boum!"

"Doctor," said the clown to the doctor, "do not be jealous— It seems to me that my grimaces will do him as much good as your prescriptions!"

The father and the mother wept, but this time from joy.

Until little François was on his feet again a carriage stopped every day before the dwelling of a workman in the street of the Abessess, at Montmartre, and a man got out with a gay powdered face, enveloped in an overcoat with the collar turned back, and underneath it one could see a clown's costume.

"What do I owe you, monsieur?" said Jacques, at last, to the master-clown when the child took his first walk, "for now I owe you something!"

The clown stretched out his two soft, Herculean hands to the parents.

"A shake of the hand!" said he.

Then placing two great kisses on the once more rosy cheeks of the child:

"And" (laughing) "permission to put on my visiting-card:

"BOUM-BOUM

Acrobatic Doctor and Physician in ordinary to little François!"